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N TO A
DEVOUT LIFE

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

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Francois de Sales

Introduction to A Devout Life

Introduction à la vie dévote

FROM THE FRENCH OF

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

Bishop and Prince of Geneva

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

AN ABSTRACT OF HIS LIFE

Frederick Pustet & Co.

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ABSTRACT OF THE LIFE

OF

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES.

FROM THE LESSONS READ ON HIS FESTIVAL IN THE ROMAN BREVIARY.

FRANCIS was born of pious and noble parents in the town of Sales, which gave name to his family. From his tender years he gave signs of future sanctity, by his innocence, and the gravity of his manners. Having in his youth applied himself to the liberal sciences, he soon after engaged in the study of philosophy and theology at Paris; and, that nothing might be wanting to the cultivation of his mind, he obtained the degree of Doctor, both in the canon and civil law, with great applause, in the university of Padua. During a visit which he made to the holy house of Loretto he renewed the vow of perpetual chastity, which he had long before made at Paris, and never suffered himself to be withdrawn from a resolute adhesion to this virtue, either by the deceits of wicked spirits, or the allurements of the senses.

Having refused an eminent dignity, offered him in the parliament of Savoy, he embraced the clerical state,

and being ordained priest, and made provost of the church of Geneva, he so perfectly acquitted himself of every duty of that station, that Granerius, the bishop, made choice of him to preach the word of God to the inhabitants of Chablais, and other territories bordering upon Geneva, in order to reclaim them from the errors of Calvinism. He undertook this mission with cheerfulness and alacrity, and in the course of it suffered incredible labors, hardships, calumnies, and injuries, being often sought for by the heretics, and in danger of being assassinated by them. But in the midst of these numberless perils his constancy was always so firm and inflexible, that, by the assistance of God, he is said to have reclaimed to the Catholic faith no less than seventy-two thousand persons, amongst whom are numbered many illustrious for their nobility and learning.

After the death of Granerius, who had prevailed upon him to accept the office of coadjutor, he was consecrated Bishop. The brilliancy of his sanctity, the lustre of his zeal for Church discipline, his love of peace, his compassion for the poor, and all his other virtues, soon spread themselves abroad on all sides. For the greater honor and glory of God, he instituted a new order of religious women, which took its name from the Visitation of the blessed Virgin, under the rule of St. Austin; to which he added his own constitutions, no less admirable for their wisdom than for their mildness and discretion. He also illustrated the Church by his writings, replete with heavenly doctrine, in which he points out a safe and plain way to Christian

perfection. At length, in the fifty-eighth year of his age, on his return from France to Annessy, after having celebrated mass at Lyons, on the festival of St. John the Evangelist, he was seized with a grievous illness, and on the following day departed to heaven, in the year of our Lord 1622. His body was carried to Annessy, where it was honorably interred in the Church of the Nuns of the above-mentioned order, and soon became illustrious for several miracles; which being duly proved, he was canonized in the year 1665 by Pope Alexander VII., who assigned the 29th of January for his festival.

In the bull of his canonization the following miracles are recorded to have been, upon the strictest examination, found incontestable: —

1. *Jerome Gemin*, who had been drowned, was carried in his winding-sheet to the grave; his carcass, by its stench, denoted that putrefaction had already commenced: when suddenly he returned to life, moved his arms, and raised his voice to publish the praises of Francis of Sales, who, as he related, had at that very instant appeared to him in his episcopal habit, with a mild and glorious countenance. Many other wonderful circumstances greatly added to the lustre of the miracle.

2. *Claudius Marmon*, a boy of seven years of age, who had been blind from his birth, after having performed nine days' prayer, whilst he was lying prostrate at the feet of the holy prelate, received his sight upon the spot.

3. *Jane Petronilla Evrax*, five years old, labored

under so inveterate a palsy that no hopes were entertained of her recovery, her hips and legs being quite withered. At the very hour at which her father was praying for her, at the tomb of Francis, she was on a sudden perfectly cured, and, getting up, ran to her mother.

4. *Claudius Julier*, aged ten years, was afflicted in like manner with a palsy, which he had brought with him into the world, in so grievous a manner that he had not the use of either of his hips or of his legs. Being carried by his mother, for the third time, to kiss the tomb of Francis of Sales, he received, upon the spot, strength and vigor in all his joints and limbs, which were before useless, and in a moment raised himself up, stood upon his feet, and walked.

5. *Frances de la Pesse*, who, by falling into a river, had been drowned, was restored to life at the tomb, and by the intercession of the holy prelate. All the marks of deformity which that dreadful accident had left in her body, together with the livid color and swelling, were on a sudden wonderfully removed.

6. *James Guidi*, whose nerves were contracted, and who had been an absolute cripple from his birth, imploring the assistance of the prayers of the servant of God, was in an instant perfectly cured.

7. *Charles Materon*, who had been a cripple from his very birth, and strangely deformed in his whole body, was, by the intercession of the saint, instantly cured, so that he received upon the spot the perfect figure of a man, together with the use of his limbs.

All these miracles, with their respective circum-

stances, were proved with the utmost evidence, both as to the matters of fact, which were attested by many credible eye-witnesses, and as to their being clearly beyond all the power of nature or art; the more so, because they were all of them wrought almost instantaneously.

A DEDICATORY PRAYER OF THE AUTHOR

O SWEET Jesus, my Lord, my Saviour, and my God! behold me here prostrate before thy Majesty, devoting and consecrating this work to thy glory; give life to its words by thy blessing, that those souls for whom I have composed it may receive from it the sacred inspirations which I desire for them. And particularly grant them that of imploring for me thy infinite mercy: to the end that, while I point out to others the way of devotion in this world, I may not myself be eternally rejected and confounded in the other; but that with them I may forever sing, as a canticle of triumph, the words which with my whole heart I pronounce, in testimony of my fidelity amidst the hazards of this mortal life: *Live, Jesus! live, Jesus! yea, Lord Jesus! live and reign in our hearts forever and ever.* Amen.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

My dear Reader, I pray thee to read this Preface for our mutual satisfaction.

GLYCERA, the nosegay-maker, knew so well how to diversify and arrange her flowers, that with the same flowers she made a great variety of nosegays. The painter Pausius, in attempting to imitate them, failed in his design, for he could not diversify his painting so variously as Glycera did her nosegays. It is in like manner that the Holy Ghost disposes and orders, with so much variety, the instructions of devotion which he gives us by the tongues and pens of his servants, that, although the doctrine be the same, the mode of treating it differs according to the several methods in which they are composed. I neither can nor will, nor indeed ought I to write anything in this Introduction, upon this subject, different from that which has been already published by our predecessors. The flowers which I present thee are the same; but the nosegay which I have made of them differs from theirs, being made up in a different order and method.

Almost all that have hitherto treated of devotion have had in view the instruction of persons wholly retired from the world; or have taught a kind of devotion leading to this absolute retirement; whereas my

intention is to instruct such as live in towns, in families, or at court, and who, by their condition, are obliged to lead, as to the exterior, a common life; who frequently, under imaginary pretence of impossibility, will not so much as think of undertaking a devout life: believing that as no beast dares taste the seed of the herb Palma Christi, so no man ought to aspire to the palm of Christian piety as long as he lives in the bustle of temporal affairs. Now, to such I shall prove that as the mother-pearl-fish lives in the sea without receiving a drop of salt water; and as towards the Chelidonian islands springs of fresh water may be found in the midst of the sea; and as the fire-fly passes through the flames without burning its wings, so a vigorous and resolute soul may live in the world without being infected by any of its humors, may discover sweet springs of piety amidst its salt waters, and fly amongst the flames of earthly concupiscences without burning the wings of the holy desires of a devout life. This, it is true, is a difficult task, and, therefore, I wish that many would endeavor to accomplish it with more ardor than has been hitherto done; and I, weak as I am, shall endeavor, by this treatise, to contribute some little assistance to such as, with a generous heart, shall undertake so worthy an enterprise.

Yet it is not through my own choice, or inclination, that this Introduction is now made public. A pious and virtuous soul, having some time since received of God the grace of aspiring to a devout life, desired my particular assistance for that purpose. Being under many obligations to her, and having long before dis-

covered in her a warm disposition to piety, I applied myself very diligently to her instruction; and having conducted her through all the exercises suitable to her desire and condition, I left her certain memorials in writing, of which she might occasionally make use. These she afterwards communicated to a learned and devout religious man; who, believing that many might profit by their perusal, earnestly requested me to have them published, to which I readily acquiesced, from a conviction that his judgment was superior to mine, and because his friendship had great influence over my will.

That the whole might be more profitable and agreeable, I have revised and connected the different parts, adding several advices and instructions which appeared suited to my intention. Numberless occupations left me little leisure for the accomplishment of my design. hence you will find in this treatise neither order nor method, but merely a collection of good admonitions which I have delivered in plain and intelligible words. without bestowing so much as a thought on the ornaments of language, having business of more consequence to attend to.

I address my discourse to Philothea, because desiring to reduce what I at first had written for one only, to the common advantage of many souls; I make use of a name applicable to all such as aspire to devotion: for the Greek word Philothea signifies a soul loving, or in love with, God. Regarding, then, throughout this work a soul which by the desire of devotion aspires to the love of God, I have divided it into five parts. In the first, I endeavor, by remonstrance and exercises, to (1)

convert the simple desire of Philothea into an absolute resolution, which she at last makes, by a firm protestation, after her general confession, followed by the most holy communion, in which, giving herself up to her Saviour, she happily enters into his holy love. In the second part, to lead her farther on, I show her the two great means by which she may unite herself more and more to his divine Majesty, viz., the use of the sacraments, by which our good God comes to us; and holy prayer, by which he attracts us to himself. In the third, I show her how she ought to exercise herself in the virtues most proper for her advancement; not stopping, except at some particular advices, which she could hardly have received elsewhere, or discovered herself. In the fourth part I expose to her view some of the snares of her enemies, showing her how she may escape them, and proceed forward in her laudable undertaking. In the fifth and last place I make her retire a little to refresh herself, recover breath, and repair her strength, that she may afterwards more happily gain ground, and advance in a devout life.

In this capricious age I foresee that many will say that it belongs only to members of religious communities to give particular directions concerning piety, since they have more leisure than a bishop can have who is charged with a diocese so heavy as mine is; that such an undertaking too much distracts the understanding, which should be employed in affairs of importance. But I tell thee, dear reader, with the great St. Denys, that it belongs principally to bishops to conduct souls to perfection, since their order is as supreme among

men as that of the seraphim is among the angels, so that their leisure cannot be better employed. The ancient bishops and fathers of the church, it must be granted, were at least as careful of their charge as we are; yet they declined not to superintend the particular conduct of several souls who had recourse to their assistance, as we see by their epistles, in which instance they imitated the apostles, who, amidst the general harvest of the world, picked up certain remarkable ears of corn with a special and particular affection. Who is ignorant that Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Onesimus, St. Thecla, and Appia, were the dear disciples of the great St. Paul, as St. Mark and St. Petronilla were of St. Peter, — St. Petronilla, I say, who, as Baronius and Galonius learnedly prove, was not St. Peter's carnal, but only his spiritual, daughter? And does not St. John write one of his canonical epistles to the devout Lady Electa?

It is painful, I confess, to direct souls in particular; but it is a pain that gives a comfort like that which is felt by the laborers in the harvest and vintage, who are never better pleased than when they have most to do, and when their burdens are the heaviest. It is a labor which refreshes and revives the heart by the sweet delight it excites in those who are engaged in it: as the cinnamon refreshes those who carry it through Arabia Felix. It is said that when the tigress finds one of her whelps, which the huntsman leaves in the way to amuse her, whilst he carries off the rest of the litter, she loads herself with it, and yet feels not herself encumbered; but, on the contrary, more active in the course which she

takes to secure it in her den; natural love diminishing the weight of her burden. How much more willingly, then, will a fatherly heart take charge of a soul in which he has found a desire of holy perfection; carrying it in his bosom as a mother does her little child, without being wearied by so precious a burden! But this must be, indeed, a fatherly heart; and therefore the apostles and apostolic men call their disciples not only their children, but, still more tenderly, their *little* children.

It is true, dear reader, that I here write of a devout life, without being myself devout, yet certainly not without a desire of becoming so; and it is this affection towards devotion which encourages me to instruct thee. For, as a great and learned man has said, "to study, is a good way to learn; to hear, is a still better; but to teach, is the best of all."—"It often happens," said St. Austin, writing to his devout Florentina, "that the office of distributing gives us the merit of receiving; and that the office of teaching serves as a foundation for learning."

Alexander caused the picture of his fair Campaspe to be drawn by the hand of the celebrated Apelles; as the painter was obliged to look upon her for a considerable time together, as fast as he drew her features in his picture the love of them became insensibly imprinted in his heart. The circumstance coming to the knowledge of Alexander, taking pity on Apelles, he gave her to him in marriage, depriving himself, for his sake, of the woman whom he loved most in the world, in which action, says Pliny, he showed the greatness of his mind as much as he could have done by the most

signal victory. Now I am of opinion, beloved reader, that it is the will of God, that I, being a bishop, should paint upon the hearts of his people, not only common virtues, but also his most dear and well-beloved devotion. And I willingly undertake the office, as well in obedience to him, and to discharge my duty, as with the hope that, by engraving her in the minds of others, my own may become enamored with her beauty Now, if ever this divine Majesty shall see me passionately in love with her, he will give her to me in an eternal marriage. The fair and chaste Rebecca, watering Isaac's camels, was destined to be his wife, and received, on his part, golden ear-rings and bracelets. Thus do I flatter myself, through the infinite goodness of God, that whilst I conduct his dear sheep to the wholesome waters of devotion, he will make my soul his spouse, putting in my ears the golden words of his holy love; and on my arms, strength to practise good works, in which consists the essence of true devotion; which I humbly beseech his divine Majesty to grant to me, and all the children of his Church, to which I forever submit my writings, my actions, my words, my thoughts and inclinations.

At Annessy, the Feast of St. M. Magdalen, 1609.

INTRODUCTION

TO

A DEVOUT LIFE.

Part First.

CONTAINING INSTRUCTIONS AND EXERCISES FOR CONDUCTING THE SOUL FROM HER FIRST DESIRE TILL SHE BE BROUGHT TO A FULL RESOLUTION TO EMBRACE A DEVOUT LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE DESCRIPTION OF TRUE DEVOTION.

YOU aspire to devotion, my dearest Philothea, because, being a Christian, you know it to be a virtue extremely pleasing to the Divine Majesty. But since small faults, committed in the beginning of any undertaking, grow in the progress infinitely greater, and become in the end almost irreparable, you must first know what the virtue of devotion is; for since there is but one true devotion, and many which are false and deceitful, if you cannot distinguish that which is true, you may easily deceive and amuse yourself in following some fantastical and superstitious devotion.

As Aurelius painted all the faces of his pictures to the air and resemblance of the woman he loved, so every one paints devotion according to his own passion and fancy. He that is addicted to fasting thinks himself very devout if he fasts, though his heart be at the same time filled with rancor, and scrupling to moisten his tongue with wine, or even with water, through sobriety, he makes no difficulty to drink deep of his neighbor's blood, by detraction and calumny. Another considers himself devout because he recites daily a multiplicity of prayers, though immediately afterwards he utters the most disagreeable, arrogant, and injurious words amongst his domestics and neighbors. Another cheerfully draws an alms out of his purse to relieve the poor, but cannot draw meekness out of his heart to forgive his enemies. Another readily forgives enemies, but never satisfies his creditors but by constraint. These, by some, are esteemed devout, while, in reality, they are by no means so.

As Saul's servants sought David in his house, but Michol, laying a statue in his bed, and covering it with his clothes, made them believe it was David himself, so many persons, by covering themselves with certain external actions belonging to devotion, make the world believe that they are truly devout, whereas they are in reality nothing but statues and phantoms of devotion.

True devotion, Philothea, presupposes, not a partial, but a thorough love of God. For inasmuch as divine love adorns the soul, it is called grace, making us pleasing to the Divine Majesty;

inasmuch as it gives us the strength to do good, it is called charity; but when it is arrived at that degree of perfection by which it not only makes us do well, but also work diligently, frequently, and readily, then it is called devotion.

As ostriches never fly, as hens fly low, heavily, and but seldom, and as eagles, doves, and swallows fly aloft, swiftly and frequently, so sinners fly not at all towards God, but lie, grovelling on earth, with only earthly objects in view. Good people, who have not as yet attained to devotion, fly towards God by their good works, but rarely slowly and heavily; but devout souls ascend to Him by more frequent, prompt, and lofty flights. In short, devotion is nothing else but that spiritual agility and vivacity by which charity works in us, or we work by her, with alacrity and affection; and as it is the business of charity to make us observe all God's commandments, generally and without exception, so it is the part of devotion to make us observe them more fully and with diligence. Wherefore he who observes not all the commandments of God cannot be esteemed either good or devout; since to be good he must be possessed of charity; and to be devout, besides charity, he must show a cheerfulness and alacrity in the performance of charitable actions.

As devotion, then, consists in a certain excellent degree of charity, it makes us not only active and diligent in the observance of God's commandments, but it also excites us to the performance of every good work with an affectionate alacrity, though it be not of precepts, but only of counsel.

For as a man newly recovered from any infirmity walks as much as is necessary for him, but yet slowly and at his leisure, so a sinner, just healed of his iniquity, walks as far as God commands him, yet slowly and heavily, till such time as he attains to devotion; for then, like a man in sound health, he not only walks, but runs, and springs forward in the way of God's commandments; and, moreover, advances with rapidity in the paths of his heavenly counsels and inspiration.

To conclude: charity and devotion differ no more from each other than fire does from flame; for charity is a spiritual fire, which, when inflamed, is called devoton. Hence it appears that devotion adds nothing to the fire of charity but the flame, which makes it ready, active, and diligent, not only in the observance of the commandments of God, but also in the execution of his heavenly counsels and inspirations.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROPRIETY AND EXCELLENCY OF DEVOTION.

THEY who discouraged the Israelites from going into the land of promise told them it was a country which devoured its inhabitants; or, in other words, that it was impossible to withstand the pestilential infection of its air; and, further, that the natives were such monsters that they

devoured men like locusts. It is in this manner, my dear Philothea, that the world defames holy devotion, representing devout persons as a peevish, gloomy, and sullen race of men, pretending that devotion begets melancholy and insupportable humors. But as Josue and Caleb protested that the promised land was not only good and fair, but also that the possession of it would be sweet and agreeable, so the Holy Ghost, by the mouths of all the saints, and our Saviour by his own, assure us that a devout life is a life of all others the most sweet, happy, and amiable.

The world beholds devout people to fast, pray, suffer injuries, serve the sick, and give alms to the poor; it sees them watch over themselves, restrain their anger, stifle their passions, deprive themselves of sensual pleasures, and perform other actions in themselves painful and rigorous; but the world discerns not the inward cordial devotion which renders all these actions agreeable, sweet, and easy. Look at the bees: they find upon the thyme a very bitter juice, yet, in sucking it, they convert it into honey, because such is their property. O worldlings! devout souls, it is true, find much bitterness in their exercises of mortification; but in performing them they convert them into the most delicious sweetness. The fires, flames, wheels, and swords, seemed flowers and perfumes to the martyrs, because they were devout. If, then, devotion can confer a sweetness on the most cruel torments, and even on death itself, what can it not do for virtuous actions? Sugar sweetens green fruits, and corrects whatever crudity or un-

wholesomeness may be in those that are ripe. Now, devotion is that true spiritual sugar which corrects the bitterness of mortification by the sweetness of its consolations; it removes discontent from the poor; solicitude from the rich; sadness from the oppressed; insolence from the exalted; melancholy from the solitary, and dissipation from him that is in company. It serves as well for fire in winter as for dew in summer. It knows as well how to use abundance as how to suffer want, and how to render honor and contempt equally profitable. In a word, it entertains pleasure and pain with equanimity, and replenishes the soul with an admirable sweetness.

Contemplate Jacob's ladder, for in it you have a true picture of a devout life. The two parallel sides between which we ascend, and in which the rounds are fixed, represent prayer, which obtains the love of God, and the sacraments which confer it. The rounds are the several degrees of charity by which we advance from virtue to virtue, either descending by action to the help and support of our neighbor, or ascending by contemplation to an amorous union with God. Now, look attentively, I beseech you, upon those who are on this ladder: they are either men who have angelical hearts, or angels clothed in human bodies. They are not young, although they seem so, because they are full of vigor and spiritual activity. They have wings to soar up to God by holy prayer; but they have also feet to walk with men by a holy and edifying conversation. Their countenances are fair and cheerful, because they receive all

things with sweetness and content. Their legs, their arms, and heads are bare, because in all their thoughts, affections, and actions they have no other design or motive than that of pleasing God. The rest of their body has no other covering than a fair and light robe, to show that, although they make use of the world and worldly things, yet they use them in a most pure and moderate manner, not taking more of them than is necessary for their condition. Such are devout persons. Believe me, dear Philothea, devotion is the quintessence of pleasures, the queen of virtues, and the perfection of charity. If charity be milk, devotion is the cream; if charity be a plant, devotion is its flower; if charity be a precious stone, devotion is its lustre; if charity be a rich balm, devotion is its odor; yea, the odor of sweetness, which comforts men and rejoices angels.

CHAPTER III.

DEVOTION IS COMPATIBLE WITH EVERY STATION OF LIFE.

AS in the creation, God commanded the plants to bring forth their fruits, each one according to its kind, so he commands all Christians, who are the living plants of his Church, to bring forth the fruits of devotion, each according to his quality and vocation. Devotion ought, then, to be not only differently exercised by the gentleman, the trades-

man, the servant, the prince, the widow, the maid, and the married woman, but its practice should be also adapted to the strength, the employments, and obligations of each one in particular. For I ask thee, Philothea, is it fit that a bishop should lead the solitary life of a Carthusian? or that married people should lay up no greater store than the Capuchin? If a tradesman were to remain the whole day in the church, like the religious, or were the religious man continually exposed to encounter difficulties in the service of his neighbor, as the bishop is, would not such devotion be ridiculous, preposterous, and insupportable? This fault is, nevertheless, very common, and hence the world, which distinguishes not between real devotion and the indiscretion of those who imagine themselves to be devout, murmurs at the devotion which cannot prevent these disorders.

No, Philothea, true devotion does no harm whatever, but rather gives perfection to all things; but when it is not compatible with our lawful vocation, then, without doubt, it is false. "The bee," says Aristotle, "extracts honey from flowers without injuring them, and leaves them as entire and fresh as she found them." True devotion goes still further, for it not only does no injury to any vocation or employment, but, on the contrary, adorns and beautifies it. As all sorts of precious stones, when cast into honey, receive a greater lustre, each according to its color, so every one's vocation becomes more agreeable when united with devotion. By devotion, the care of the family is rendered more peaceable, the love of

the husband and wife more sincere; the service of the prince more faithful; and every employment more pleasant and agreeable.

It is an error, or rather a heresy, to say that devotion is incompatible with the life of a soldier, a tradesman, a prince, or a married woman. It is true, Philothea, that a devotion purely contemplative, monastical, and religious, cannot be exercised in those vocations; but, besides these three kinds of devotion, there are several others proper to conduct to perfection those who live in the secular state. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, Job, Tobias, Sarah, Rebecca, and Judith, bear witness of this in the Old Testament; and in the New, St. Joseph, Lydia, and St. Crispin, practised perfect devotion in their shops; St. Ann, St. Martha, St. Monica, Aquila, Priscilla, in their families; Cornelius, St. Sebastian, St. Maurice, in the army; Constantine, Helena, St Lewis, blessed Amedæus, and St. Edward, on the throne. Nay, it has happened that many have lost perfection in the desert who had preserved it in the world, which seems so little favorable to perfection. "Lot," says St. Gregory, "who was so chaste in the city, defiled himself in the wilderness." Wheresoever, then, we are, we may, and should, aspire to a perfect life.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE NECESSITY OF A GUIDE TO CONDUCT US IN THE WAY OF DEVOTION.

YOUNG Tobias, being commanded to go to Rages, answered, "I know not the way." "Go then," replied his father, "and seek some man to conduct thee." I say the same to thee, my Philothea. Wouldst thou walk in earnest towards devotion, seek some good man, who may guide and conduct thee; this is the best advice I can give thee. "Though you search for the will of God," says the devout Avila, "you shall never so assuredly find it as in the way of humble obedience, so much recommended and practised by all holy persons who have aspired to devotion." St. Teresa, seeing the lady Catharine, of Cardona, perform such rigorous penances, desired anxiously to imitate her, contrary to the advice of her confessor. The saint was much tempted to disobey him in that particular; but God said to her: "Daughter, thou art in a good and secure way; seest thou her penance? But I value more thy obedience." Hence she conceived so high an esteem for this virtue that, besides that which she owed to her superiors, she vowed a particular obedience to an excellent man, to whose direction and advice she implicitly submitted. In return for this obedience she, as well as many other devout souls before and after her, who, that they might more entirely subject themselves to God, submitted their wills to that

of his servants, enjoyed most unspeakable consolations. St. Catharine, of Sienna, in her dialogues, highly applauds this implicit obedience. The devout princess, St. Elizabeth, submitted herself with an entire obedience to the learned Conradus; and the advice given by the great St. Lewis to his son, a little before his death, was, "Confess often; choose a good confessor, a wise man, who may safely teach thee to do the things that shall be necessary for thee."

"A faithful friend," says the Holy Scripture, "is a strong defence; and he that hath found him hath found a treasure. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality; and they that fear the Lord shall find him."—Eccli., vi., 14., 16. These divine words, as you may easily perceive, refer to a happy immortality, for the attainment of which it is necessary that we should submit ourselves to the direction of a faithful friend, who, by the prudence and wisdom of his counsels, may guide us in all our actions, and secure us from the ambushes and deceits of the wicked one. Such a friend will be to us as a treasure of wisdom and consolation, in all our afflictions, our sorrows, and relapses; he will serve as a medicine to cure, and as a cordial to comfort our hearts in our spiritual disorders; he will guard us from evil, and make us advance in good; and should any infirmity befall us, he will assist in our recovery, and prevent its being unto death.

But who shall find this friend? They that fear the Lord, answers the wise man; that is, the humble, who earnestly desire their spiritual ad-

vancement. Since, then, it concerns you so much, Philothea, to travel with a good guide in this holy road to devotion, beseech God, with the greatest importunity, to furnish you with one who may be according to his own heart; and be assured that he will rather send you an angel from heaven, as he did to young Tobias, than fail to grant your request.

Now, such a guide, when you have found him, ought always to be an angel to you; consider him not as a mere man; place not your confidence in his human learning, but in God, whose minister he is, and who speaks to you by his means, putting in his heart and in his mouth whatever shall be requisite for your happiness, so that you ought to pay as much attention to him as to an angel who would come down from heaven to conduct you thither. Open your heart to him with all sincerity and fidelity, manifesting clearly and explicitly the state of your conscience without fiction or dissimulation; by this means your good actions will be examined and approved; and your evil ones corrected and remedied; you will be comforted and strengthened in your afflictions, and be kept regularly in order in your consolations. Place great confidence in him, but let it be united with a holy reverence, so that the reverence may not diminish the confidence, nor the confidence the reverence. Confide in him with the respect of a daughter towards her father; respect him with the confidence of a son towards his mother. In a word, your friendship for him ought to be strong and sweet, pure and holy, entirely spiritual and divine.

"For this end, choose one amongst a thousand," says Avila; but I say, choose one amongst ten thousand; for there are fewer than can be imagined who are capable of this office. He must be a man of charity, learning, and prudence. If any one of these three qualities be wanting in him, there is danger; but I say to you again, Ask him of God, and having obtained him, bless his Divine Majesty, remain constant, and seek no other; but proceed on, with sincerity, humility, and confidence, till you arrive at the happy end of your journey.

CHAPTER V.

THAT WE MUST BEGIN BY PURIFYING THE SOUL.

"THE flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come."—Cantic. ii. 12. What else are the flowers of our hearts, O Philothea! but good desires? Now, as soon as they appear we must put our hand to the pruning-knife, to retrench from our conscience all dead and superfluous works. As the alien maid, before she could marry an Israelite, was obliged to put off the garment of her captivity, pare her nails, and shave her hair, so the soul that aspires to the honor of being spouse to the Son of God must divest herself of the old man, and clothe herself with the new, by forsaking sin, and removing every obstacle which may prevent her union with God. To enjoy a

good state of health, it is necessary that we be previously purged from offensive humors. St. Paul, in a moment, was cleansed with a perfect purgation; so was St. Catherine, of Genoa, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Pelalia, and some others; but this kind of purgation is as miraculous and extraordinary in the order of grace as the resurrection of the dead is in that of nature; and therefore to expect it would be presumptuous. The ordinary purification, or healing, whether of the body or the mind, is not instantaneously effected, but takes place gradually, by passing from one degree to another, with labor and patience.

The angels upon Jacob's ladder had wings, yet they flew not, but ascended and descended in order from one step to another. The soul that rises from sin to devotion may be compared to the dawning of the day, which at its approach expels not the darkness instantaneously, but by little and little. "The cure," says the medical aphorism, "which is made leisurely, is always the most perfect." The diseases of the heart, as well as those of the body, come posting on horseback, but depart leisurely on foot. Courage and patience then, Philothea, are necessary in this enterprise. Alas! how much are those souls to be pitied who, perceiving themselves subject to many imperfections, after having for a while exercised themselves in devotion, begin to be dissatisfied, troubled, and discouraged, and suffer their hearts to be almost overcome with the temptation of forsaking all, and returning back to their former course of life. But, on the other hand, are not those souls also in

extreme danger, who, by a contrary temptation, believe themselves quite purified from their imperfections the first day of their purgation; who think themselves perfect, though as yet scarcely formed, and presume to fly without wings! O Philothea! in what danger are they of relapsing, being so soon out of the physician's hands? "It is vain for you to rise before light" says the prophet (Ps. cxxvi, 2); "rise after you have sitten," and he himself practised this lesson; for having been already washed and cleansed, he desires to be washed and cleansed still more and more. — Ps. i. 3.

The exercise of purifying the soul neither can nor ought to end but with our life; let us not then be disturbed at the sight of our imperfections, for perfection consists in fighting against them; and how can we fight against them without seeing them, or overcome them without encountering them? Our victory consists not in being insensible to them, but in refusing them our consent; now to be displeased with them, is not to consent to them. It is absolutely necessary for the exercise of our humility that we should sometimes meet with wounds in this spiritual warfare; but then we are never overcome, unless we either lose our life or our courage. Now, imperfections or venial sins cannot deprive us of our spiritual life, which is not lost, but by mortal sin. It then only remains that we lose not our courage. "Save me, O Lord!" said David, "from pusillanimity of spirit, or cowardice and faint-heartedness." It is happy for us that in this warfare we shall always be victorious, provided we do but fight.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE FIRST PURGATION, WHICH IS THAT OF MORTAL SIN.

THE first purgation that must be made is that of mortal sin; the means to make it is the holy sacrament of penance. Seek, in the first place, the best confessor you can find; then procure some of those books which have been composed for assisting sinners to make a good confession; such as Granada, Bruno, Arias, or Auger; read them carefully, and remark, from point to point, in what you have offended from the time you came to the use of reason to the present hour. Should you distrust your memory, write down what you have observed, and having thus prepared and collected together the bad humors of your conscience, detest and renounce them with the greatest contrition and sorrow that your heart can conceive, considering these four things, (1) that by sin you have lost the grace of God; (2) that you have resigned your claim to heaven; (3) that you have chosen the eternal pains of hell; and (4) that you have renounced the eternal love of God. You see, Philothea, that I speak of a general confession of the whole life, which, though not absolutely necessary, yet I look upon as exceedingly profitable in the beginning, and, therefore, earnestly advise it. It frequently happens that the ordinary confessions of those who lead a common worldly life are full of considerable defects; for they often make little or no preparation, neither have

they sufficient contrition; nay, it too frequently happens that they go to confession with a tacit inclination of returning to sin, which appears from their subsequent unwillingness to avoid the occasions of sin, and to make use of the means necessary for the amendment of their life. In all these cases, a general confession calls us to the knowledge of ourselves; it excites in us a wholesome confusion for our past life; it makes us admire the mercy of God, who has so patiently waited for us; it appeases our hearts; composes our minds; excites us to good resolutions; gives occasion to our spiritual father to prescribe us advices more suitable to our condition, and opens our heart to declare ourselves with more confidence in our following confessions. Speaking, then, of a general renovation of your heart, and of an universal conversion of your soul to God, by undertaking a devout life, it appears necessary, Philothea, to exhort you to this general confession.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE SECOND PURGATION, WHICH IS THAT OF AFFECTION TO SIN.[1]

ALTHOUGH all the Israelites departed in effect out of the land of Egypt, yet they did not all depart in affection; wherefore many of

[1] To understand better the sentiments of the Saint, in this chapter, with regard to the *affections to sin*, at which some have taken offence-

them regretted in the wilderness their want of the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt. In like manner, there are penitents who in effect depart from sin, but yet quit it not in affection; they propose to sin no more, but it is with a certain reluctancy of heart that they deprive themselves of, or abstain from, an unhappy delectation in sin. Although they renounce and avoid it, they nevertheless often look back upon it, as Lot's wife did towards Sodom. They abstain from sin, as sick men do from melons, which they forbear to taste, because the physician threatens them with death if they eat them; but it is with the utmost reluctance that they refrain from them. They talk of them incessantly, and are unwilling to believe them hurtful. They have a continual longing for them, and think those happy who may eat them. Such is the case with loose and weak penitents; they abstain for some time from sin, but it is with the utmost regret; they would rejoice if they could sin, and not be damned; they speak of it with a certain pleasure and relish, and think those who sin more at ease. The man who was resolved to be revenged on another changes his mind in confession; but shortly after you

we must distinguish two different acceptations of these words. For if, by affection to sin, we understand the wilful love, or desire of sin, or a voluntary complacency, or delight in the thought of committing sin, it is certain that in this sense an affection to mortal sin is in itself a mortal sin. But the holy prelate does not take the affection to sin in this sense. He only means by the affection to sin, a certain propensity and inclination to sin, contracted by a former evil habit, which is apt to remain in the soul, as a relic of the old leaven, after her conversion to God, and her reconciliation in the sacrament of penance, which, though upon reflection the soul resists it, is, nevertheless, of a very dangerous nature, if not diligently purged away, according to the sentiments which the Saint here inculcates.

may find him among his friends, talking with pleasure to them of his quarrel, and saying, "Had it not been for the fear of God, and that the divine law in this article of forgiving is hard, — would to God it were allowed to revenge one's self!" Ah! who does not see, that although he be delivered from the sin, he is still entangled by an affection to it; and that, being in effect out of Egypt, he is still there in affection, longing after its garlic and onions; as a woman, who having detested her impure love, is, nevertheless, pleased with being courted and followed! Alas, in how great danger are all such people!

If you desire, O Philothea! to undertake a devout life, you must not only cease to sin, but also cleanse your heart from all affections to sin; for, besides the danger of a relapse, these wretched affections will so perpetually weaken and depress your spirits, that they will render you incapable of practising good works with alacrity and diligence, in which, nevertheless, consists the very essence of devotion. Souls that are recovered from the state of sin, and still retain these affections, are, in my opinion, like minds in the green-sickness: though not sick, yet all their actions are sick; they eat without relish, sleep without rest, laugh without joy, and rather drag themselves along than walk. This is exactly the case with those here described: they do good, but with such a spiritual heaviness that it takes away all the grace from their good exercises, which are few in number and small in effect.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE MEANS TO MAKE THIS SECOND PURGATION.

NOW, the first means, nay, the very foundation, of this second purgation is a lively sense and strong apprehension of the dreadful evils in which sin involves the soul, by means of which we conceive a deep and vehement contrition. For as contrition, be it ever so small, when joined with the virtue of the sacrament, cleanses us sufficiently from sin, so when it is great and vehement, it cleanses us even from every affection to sin. A slight hatred or rancor creates an aversion to the person whom we hate, and makes us avoid his company; but if it be a rooted and violent hatred, we not only fly and abhor him, but even loathe the conversation of his kindred and friends, and cannot endure so much as the sight of his picture, nor of anything that belongs to him. In like manner, when a penitent hates sin only with a weak, though true contrition, he forms the resolution to sin no more; but when he hates it with a rooted and vigorous contrition, he not only detests the sin, but also the affections, connections, and occasions which lead towards it. We must, then, Philothea, enlarge our contrition as much as possible; we must extend it to everything that has the least relation to sin. Thus Magdalen, in her conversion, lost so effectually the taste of the pleasure she had taken in her sins as never to think of them more. And David protested, not

only his abhorrence of sin, but also of all the ways and paths that lead to it. — Ps. xxviii. 104. In this point consists the soul's growing young again, which he beautifully compares to the renewing of the eagle. — Ps. vii. 5.

Now, in order to obtain this perfect contrition you must diligently exercise yourself in the following meditations, which, by the help of God's grace, will eradicate from your heart both sin and the affection to sin. As it is for this purpose I have composed them, use them in the order I have placed them, taking but one for each day, and that, if possible, in the morning, which is the best time for spiritual exercises; and endeavor to ruminate on them during the rest of the day. But if you be not as yet accustomed to meditation, read what shall be said on this subject in the Second Part.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST MEDITATION. — ON OUR CREATION.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God. 2. Beseech him to inspire you.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Consider that so many years ago you were not yet in the world, and that your being was a mere nothing. Where were we, O my soul! at

that time? The world had then lasted so long, and we were not known.

2. God has drawn you out of this nothing, to make you what you now are, merely out of his own pure goodness, having no need of you whatever.

3. Consider the being that God has given you; it is the greatest in this visible world, capable of eternal life, and of being perfectly united to his Divine Majesty.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

1. Humble yourself profoundly before God, saying from your heart, with the Psalmist, "O Lord! my whole being is as nothing before thee, and how hadst thou remembrance of me to create me?" Alas, my soul! thou wast ingulfed in that ancient nothing, and hadst yet been therein had not God drawn thee thence; and what couldst thou have done hadst thou remained in such a state?

2. Return thanks to God. O my great and good Creator! how much am I obliged to thee, since thou hast vouchsafed to draw me out of nothing, and by thy mercy to make me what I am? What can I ever do to bless thy holy name as I ought, and to render due thanks to thy inestimable goodness?

3. Confound yourself. But, alas! my Creator, instead of uniting myself to thee by loving and serving thee I have made myself a rebel by my disorderly affections, separating myself, and straying far away from thee to unite myself to sin,

valuing thy goodness no more than if thou hadst not been my Creator.

4. Cast yourself down before God. O my soul! know that the Lord is thy God; it is he that has made thee, and not thou thyself. O God! I am the work of thy hands.

Henceforward, then, I will take no complacency in myself, since, of myself, I am nothing. What hast thou to glory in, O dust and ashes? or, rather, thou very nothing! Why dost thou exalt thyself? To humble myself, therefore, I resolve to do such and such things, to suffer such and such disgraces. I will change my life, I will henceforward follow my Creator, and esteem myself highly honored by the being which he has given me, employing it entirely in obedience to his will, by such means as I shall learn from my spiritual father.

CONCLUSION.

1. Give thanks to God. Bless thy God, O my soul! and let all that is within me praise his holy name; for his goodness has drawn me forth, and his mercy has created me out of nothing. 2. Offer. O my God! I offer to thee the being thou has given me; from my heart I dedicate and consecrate it to thee. 3. Pray. O God! strengthen me in these affections and resolutions. O holy Virgin Mary! recommend them to the mercy of thy Son, with all those for whom I ought to pray.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

After your prayer, gather a little nosegay of devotion, to refresh you during the rest of the day.

CHAPTER X.

SECOND MEDITATION.—ON THE END FOR WHICH WE WERE CREATED.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God. 2. Beseech him to inspire you.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. God has not placed you in this world because he had need of you, for you are altogether unprofitable to him, but only to exercise his goodness in you, by giving you his grace and glory. To this end he has given you an understanding, to know him; a memory, to be mindful of him; a will, to love him; an imagination to represent his benefits to yourself; eyes to behold his wonderful works; a tongue, to praise him; and so of the other faculties.

2. Being created, and placed in the world for this end, all actions contrary to it are to be rejected, and whatever conduces not to it, ought to be condemned as vain and superfluous.

3. Consider the wretchedness of worldlings, who never think of their end, but live as if they believed themselves created for no other purpose than to build houses, plant trees, heap up riches, and amuse themselves with such like fooleries.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

1. Confound yourself, and reproach your soul with her misery, which has been hitherto so great

that she has seldom or never reflected on these truths.

Alas! Of what was I thinking, O my God! when I thought not of thee? What did I remember when I forgot thee? What did I love when I loved not thee? I ought, alas! to have fed upon truth, and yet I glutted myself with vanity; I served the world, which was created only to serve me.

2. Detest your past life. O vain thoughts and unprofitable amusements, I renounce you! O hateful and frivolous remembrances, I abjure you! O false and detestable friendships, lewd and wretched slaveries, miserable gratifications and irksome pleasures, I abhor you!

3. Return to God. O my God and my Saviour! thou shalt henceforth be the sole object of my thoughts. I will no longer apply my mind to amusements which may be displeasing to thee. My memory shall be occupied all the days of my life with the recollection of the greatness of thy clemency, so sweetly exercised towards me; thou shalt be the sole delight of my heart and the sweetness of my affections.

Ah! then the trifles and follies to which I have hitherto applied myself; those vain employments in which I have spent my days; and those reflections in which I have engaged my heart, shall henceforth be the object of my horror; and with this intention I will use such and such effectual remedies.

CONCLUSION.

1. Thank God, who has created you for so excellent an end. Thou hast made me, O Lord! for thyself, and for the eternal enjoyment of thy incomprehensible glory! O when shall I be worthy of it! When shall I bless thee as I ought? 2. Offer. I offer to thee, O dear Creator! all these affections and resolutions, with my whole heart and soul. 3. Pray. I beseech thee, O God! to accept these my desires and purposes, and to give thy blessing to my soul, that it may be able to accomplish them, through the merits of the blood of thy blessed Son shed for me upon the cross.

Our Father. Hail Mary.
Make a little nosegay of devotion.

CHAPTER XI.

THIRD MEDITATION.—ON THE BENEFITS OF GOD.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God. 2. Beseech him to inspire you.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Consider the corporal benefits which God has bestowed on you: what a body! what conveniences to maintain it! what health! what lawful comforts for its use, and recreations for its sup-

port! what friends and what assistances! How different is the situation of so many other persons, more worthy than yourself, who are destitute of these blessings! Some are disabled in their bodies, their health, or their limbs; others abandoned, and exposed to reproaches, contempt, and infamy; others oppressed with poverty; whilst God has not suffered you to become so miserable.

2. Consider the gifts of the mind. How many are there in the world stupid, frantic, or mad, and why are not you of this number? Because God has favored you. How many are there who have been brought up rudely, and in gross ignorance? and you, by God's providence, have received a good and liberal education.

3. Consider the spiritual graces. O Philothea! you are a child of the Catholic Church; God has taught you to know him, even from your childhood. How often has he given you his sacraments? How many internal illuminations and reprehensions for your amendment? How frequently has he pardoned your faults? How often has he delivered you from those dangers of eternal perdition to which you were exposed? And were not all these years past given you as so many favorable opportunities of working out your salvation? Consider a little, by descending to particulars, how sweet and gracious God has been to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

1. Admire the goodness of God. O how good is my God to me! O how good indeed! How rich is thy heart, O Lord, in mercy, and liberal in

clemency! O my soul! let us recount forever the many favors he has done us.

2. Wonder at your ingratitude. But what am I, O Lord! that thou shouldst have been so mindful of me? Ah! how great is my unworthiness! Alas! I have trodden thy blessings under foot. I have abused thy graces, perverting them to the dishonor and contempt of thy sovereign goodness. I have opposed the abyss of my ingratitude to the abyss of thy bounty and favors.

3. Excite yourself to make an acknowledgment. Well, then, O my heart! resolve now to be no more unfaithful, ungrateful, or disloyal to thy great benefactor. And how? Shall not my soul be henceforth wholly subject to God, who has wrought so many wonders and graces in me and for me?

4. Ah! withdraw then your body, Philothea, from such and such sensual pleasures, and consecrate it to the service of God, who has done so much for it. Apply your soul to know and acknowledge him by such exercises as are requisite for that purpose. Employ diligently those means which are in the Church to help you to save your soul and love God. Yes, O my God! I will be diligent in frequenting prayer and the sacraments; I will listen to thy holy word, and put thy inspirations and counsels in practice.

CONCLUSION.

Thank God for the knowledge which he has now given you of your duty, and for all the benefits which you have hitherto received. 2. Offer him

your heart, with all your resolutions. 3. Pray that he would give you strength to practise them faithfully, through the merits and death of his Divine Son. Implore the intercession of the blessed Virgin and of the saints.

Our Father. Hail Mary.
Make a little spiritual nosegay.

CHAPTER XII.

FOURTH MEDITATION. — ON SIN.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God. 2. Beseech him to inspire you.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Call to mind how long it is since you began to sin, and reflect how much, since that time, sin has multiplied in your heart; how every day you have increased the number of your sins against God, your neighbor, and yourself, by work, by word, or by desire.

2. Consider your evil inclinations, and how far you have followed them; and by these two points you shall discover that your sins are more numerous than the hairs of your head, yea, than the sands of the sea.

3. Consider in particular the sin of ingratitude against God, which is a general sin, that extends itself over all the rest, and makes them infinitely more enormous. Consider then how many benefits God has bestowed on you, and how you have abused them all, by turning them against the giver. Reflect in particular how many inspirations you have despised, how many good motions you have rendered unprofitable, and, above all, how many times you have received the sacraments, and where are the fruits of them? What are become of those precious jewels wherewith your dear spouse has adorned you? All these have been buried under your iniquities. With what preparation have you received them? Think on this ingratitude: that God having run so often after you, to save you, you have always run from him to lose yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

1. Be confounded at your misery. O my God! how dare I appear in thy presence? I am, alas! but the corruption of the world; a sink of ingratitude and iniquity. Is it possible that I should have been so ungrateful as not to have left any one of the senses of my body, or of the powers of my soul, which I have not corrupted, violated, and defiled, and that not so much as one day of my life has passed which has not produced its wicked effects? Is this the return I should have made for the benefits of my Creator and the blood of my Redeemer?

2. Crave pardon, and cast yourself at the feet of our Lord, like the prodigal son, like Magda-

len, or like a woman who has defiled her marriage bed with all kind of adultery. Have mercy, O Lord, upon this poor sinner! Alas! O living fountain of compassion! have pity on this miserable wretch.

3. Resolve to live better. No, O Lord! never more, with the help of thy grace, never more will I abandon myself to sin. Alas! I have already loved it too much; I detest it now, and I embrace thee. O Father of mercies! I resolve to live and die in thee.

4. To expiate my past sins, I will accuse myself of them courageously, and will banish every one of them from my heart.

5. I will use all possible endeavors to eradicate the sources of them from my heart; and in particular such and such vices to which I am most inclined.

6. To accomplish this, I will fervently embrace the means which I shall be advised to adopt, and will think that I have never done enough to repair such grevious offences.

CONCLUSION.

Return thanks to God for waiting for you till this hour, and bless him for having given you these good affections. 2. Offer him your heart, that you may put them in execution. 3. Implore him to strengthen you.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

Make a spiritual nosegay.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIFTH MEDITATION.—ON DEATH.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God 2. Beseech him to inspire you by his grace. 3. Imagine yourself to be in the extremity of sickness, lying on your death-bed, without any hope of recovery.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Consider the uncertainty of the day of your death. O my soul! thou shalt one day depart out of this body! but when shall the time be? Shall it be in winter or in summer? In the city or in the country? By day or by night? Shall it be suddenly or after due preparation? By sickness or by accident? Shalt thou have leisure to make thy confession? Shalt thou be assisted by thy spiritual father? Alas! of all this we know nothing; one thing only is certain: we shall die, and sooner than we imagine.

2. Consider that then the world shall end for you, for it shall last no longer to you; it shall be reversed before your eyes; for then the pleasures, the vanities, the worldly joys, and vain affections, of your life shall seem like empty shadows and airy clouds. Ah, wretch! for what toys and deceitful vanities have I offended my God? You shall then see that, for a mere

nothing, you have forsaken him. On the other hand, devotion and good works will then seem to you sweet and delightful. Oh, why did I not follow this lovely and pleasant path? Then the sins which before seemed very small will appear as large as mountains, and your devotion very small.

2. Consider the long and languishing farewell which your soul shall then give to this poor world? She shall then bid adieu to riches, vanities, and vain company; to pleasures, pastimes, friends, and neighbors; to kindred, children, husband, and wife; in a word, to every creature; and finally to her own body, which she shall leave pale, ghastly, hideous, and loathsome.

4. Consider with what precipitancy they will carry off this body to bury it under the earth; after which the world will think no more of you than you have thought of others. "The peace of God be with him," shall they say, and that is all. O death! how void art thou of regard or pity!

5. Consider how the soul, being departed from the body, takes her flight to the right hand or to the left. Alas! whither shall yours go? what way shall it take? No other than that which it began here in this world.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

1. Pray to God, and cast yourself into his arms. Ah! receive me, O Lord! into thy protection at that dreadful day; make that hour happy and favorable to me; and rather let all the other days of my life be sad and sorrowful.

2. Despise the world. Since then I know not the hour in which I must leave thee, O wretched world! I will no more set my heart on thee. O my dear friends and relations! pardon me if I love you no more, but with a holy friendship, which may last eternally; for why should I unite myself to you, since I shall be one day forced to break those ties asunder?

I will then prepare myself for that hour, and take all possible care to end this journey happily; I will secure the state of my conscience to the best of my power, and will form immediate and efficacious resolutions for the amendment of such and such defects.

CONCLUSION.

Give thanks to God for these resolutions which he has given you. Offer them to his Divine Majesty. Beseech him to grant you a happy death, through the merits of the death of his beloved Son; implore the assistance of the blessed Virgin and the saints in heaven.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

Make a nosegay of myrrh.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIXTH MEDITATION —ON JUDGMENT.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself before God. 2. Beseech him to inspire you.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. After the time God has prescribed for the duration of this world; after many dreadful signs and presages, which shall cause men to wither away through fear and apprehension; a fire, raging like a torrent, shall burn and reduce to ashes the whole face of the earth; nothing that exists shall escape its fury.

2. After this deluge of flames and of thunderbolts, all men shall rise from their graves, excepting such as are already risen, and at the voice of the angel they shall appear in the valley of Josaphat. But, alas! with what difference! for some shall arise with glorious and resplendent bodies; others in bodies most hideous and frightful.

3. Consider the majesty with which the Sovereign Judge will appear, surrounded by all the angels and saints. Before him shall be borne his cross, shining more brilliantly than the sun; a standard of mercy to the good, and of rigor to the wicked.

4. This Sovereign Judge, by his awful command, which shall be suddenly executed, shall separate the good from the bad, placing the one at

his right hand, and the other at his left. O everlasting separation, after which these two companies shall never more meet together!

5. This separation being made, and the book of conscience opened, all men shall clearly see the malice of the wicked, and their contempt of divine grace; and, on the other hand, the penitence of the good, and the effect of the grace which they have received; for nothing shall be hidden. O good God! what confusion will this be to the one, and what consolation to the other!

6. Consider the last sentence of the wicked: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Ponder well these awful words. "Depart from me." A sentence of eternal banishment against those miserable wretches, excluding them from his presence for all eternity. He calls them cursed. O my soul, what a curse! a general curse, including all manner of evils! — a general curse, which comprises all time and eternity! He adds, "into everlasting fire!" Behold, O my heart! this vast eternity. O eternal eternity of pains, how dreadful art thou!

7. Consider the contrary sentence of the good. "Come," saith the Judge. O the sweet word of salvation, by which God draws us to himself, and receives us into the bosom of his goodness! "Ye blessed of my Father." O dear blessing, which comprises all blessings! "Possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." O good God! what an excess of bounty! for this kingdom shall never have an end.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

1. Tremble, O my soul! at the remembrance of these things. O my God! who shall secure me in that day when the pillars of heaven shall tremble for fear!

2. Detest your sins, which alone can condemn on that dreadful day.

Ah! I will judge myself now that I may not be judged then! I will examine my conscience, and condemn myself; I will accuse myself, and amend my life, that the eternal Judge may not condemn me on that dreadful day. I will, therefore, confess my sins, and receive all necessary advice.

CONCLUSION.

Thank God, who has given you the means of providing for your security at that day, and time to do penance. Offer him your heart to perform it. Beg of him to give you the grace duly to accomplish it.

Our Father. Hail Mary.
Make your spiritual nosegay.

CHAPTER XV.

SEVENTH MEDITATION. — ON HELL.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God. 2. Humble yourself, and implore his assistance. 3. Represent to yourself a city involved in darkness, burning with brimstone and stinking pitch, and full of inhabitants who cannot make their escape.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. The damned are in the abyss of hell, as within a woful city, where they suffer unspeakable torments in all their senses and members, because as they have employed all their senses and their members in sinning, so shall they suffer in each of them the punishment due to sin. The eyes for lascivious looks shall endure the horrible sight of devils and of hell. The ears, for having taken delight in vicious discourses, shall hear nothing but wailings, lamentations, desperate howlings; and so of the rest.

2. Besides all these torments, there is yet a greater, which is the privation and loss of the glory of God, from the sight of which the damned are excluded for ever. Now, if Absalom found the privation of the amiable face of his father, David, more grievous to him than his banishment, good God! what grief will it cause to be forever excluded

from the sight of thy most sweet and gracious countenance?

3. Consider, above all, the eternity of those pains, which alone makes hell insupportable. Alas! if a little insect in your ear, or the heat of a fever, makes one short night seem so long and tedious, how terrible will the night of eternity be, accompanied with so many torments! From this eternity proceed eternal despair, infinite rage, and blasphemies, etc.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

Terrify your soul with the words of the prophet Isaiah. O my soul! art thou able to dwell with this devouring fire? Canst thou endure to dwell with everlasting burning? Canst thou think of parting with thy God forever?

Confess that you have often deserved it. But henceforward I will take a new course; for why should I go down into this bottomless pit? I will use such and such endeavors to avoid sin, which alone can bring me to this eternal death. Give thanks, offer, pray.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XVI.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.—ON HEAVEN.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God. 2. Beseech him to inspire you with his grace.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Consider a fair and clear night, and reflect how delightful it is to behold the sky bespangled with all that multitude and variety of stars; then join this beautiful sight with that of a fine day, so that the brightness of the sun may not prevent the clear view of the stars nor of the moon; and then say boldly that all this beauty put together is nothing when compared with the excellence of the great heavenly paradise. O how lovely, how desirable is this place! O how precious is this city!

2. Consider the glory, the beauty, and the multitude of the inhabitants of this happy country; millions of millions of angels, of cherubin and seraphin; choirs of apostles, prophets, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and holy women; the multitude is innumerable. O how glorious is this company! the least of them is more beautiful to behold than the whole world; what a sight then will it be to behold them all! But, O my God! how happy are they! they sing incessantly harmonious songs of eternal love! they always enjoy a state of felicity;

they mutually give each other unspeakable contentment, and live in the consolation of a happy, indissoluble society.

3. In fine, consider how happy the blessed are in the enjoyment of God, who favors them forever with a sight of his lovely presence, and thereby infuses into their hearts a treasure of delights. How great a felicity must it be to be united to their first principle, their Sovereign Good. They are like happy birds, flying and singing perpetually in the air of his divinity, which encompasses them on all sides with incredible pleasure. There every one does his utmost, and sings without envy the praises of his Creator. Blessed be thou forever, O sweet and sovereign Creator and Saviour, who art so good, and who dost communicate to us so liberally the everlasting treasures of thy glory! And blessed forever be you, says he, my beloved creatures, who have served me so faithfully, with love and constancy; behold you shall be admitted to sing my praises forever.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

1. Admire and praise this heavenly country. O how beautiful art thou, my dear Jerusalem! and how happy are thy inhabitants.

2. Reproach your heart with the pusillanimity with which it has hitherto strayed so far out of the way of this glorious habitation. Oh! why have I wandered at so great a distance from my sovereign happiness? Ah! wretch that I am, for these false and trifling pleasures I have a thousand and a thousand times turned my back upon these eter-

nal and infinite delights. Was I not mad to despise such precious blessings for gratifications so vain and contemptible?

3. Aspire with fervor to this most delightful abode. O good and gracious Lord! since it has pleased thee at length to direct my wandering steps into thy ways, never hereafter will I return back from them. Let us go, O my dear soul! let us walk towards this blessed land which is promised us: what are we doing in Egypt? I will therefore disburden myself of all such things as may divert or retard me in so happy a journey; I will perform such and such things as may conduct me thither.

Give thanks, offer, pray.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XVII.

NINTH MEDITATION.—BY WAY OF ELECTION AND CHOICE OF HEAVEN.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God. 2. Humble yourself before him, and beseech him to inspire you with his grace. 3. Imagine yourself to be in an open field, alone with your good angel, like young Tobias going to Rages. Imagine that he shows you heaven open above, with all the pleasures represented in the last med-

tation; and that then he shows you beneath hell open, with all the torments described in the meditation on hell. Being thus situated in imagination, and kneeling before your good angel, make the following

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Consider that you are certainly placed between heaven and hell; and that both the one and the other lie open to receive you, according to the choice which you shall make.

2. Consider that the choice which we make in this world shall last for all eternity in the world to come.

3. And though both the one and the other be open to receive you according to your choice, yet God, who is ready to give you either the one by his justice, or the other by his mercy, wishes, nevertheless, with an incomparable desire, that you would choose heaven; and your good angel also importunes you to it with all his power, offering you, in God's name, a thousand graces, and a thousand assistances to help you to obtain it.

4. Consider that Jesus Christ in his clemency looks down upon you from above, and graciously invites you, saying, "Come, my dear soul, to enjoy an everlasting rest, within the arms of my goodness, where I have prepared immortal delights for thee in the abundance of my love." Behold likewise, with your interior eyes, the blessed Virgin, who with maternal tenderness exhorts you, saying, "Take courage, my child; despise not the desires of my Son, nor the many sighs which I

have cast forth for thee, thirsting with him for thy eternal salvation." Behold the saints also exhort you, and millions of blessed souls sweetly invite you; they wish for nothing more than to see your heart one day united with theirs in praising and loving God forever; and assure you that the way to heaven is not so difficult as the world would persuade you. "Be of good heart, dear brother," say they; "he that diligently considers the way of devotion by which we ascended hither, shall see that we acquired these immortal delights by pleasures incomparably more sweet than those of the world."

ELECTION.

1. O hell! I detest thee now and forevermore; I detest thy torments and pains; I detest thy accursed and miserable eternity; and above all, I detest those eternal blasphemies and maledictions which thou vomitest out against my God. And, turning my heart and my soul towards thee, O heavenly paradise, everlasting glory, and endless felicity! I choose my habitation forever within thy holy and most lovely tabernacles. I bless thy mercy, O my God! and I accept of the offer which thou art pleased to make me. O Jesus, my sweet Saviour! I accept thy everlasting love, and the place which thou hast purchased for me in this blessed Jerusalem; not so much for any other motive, as to love and bless thee forever and ever.

2. Accept the favors which the blessed Virgin and the saints offer you. Promise to make the best of your way to join their company; and give

your hand to your good angel, that he may conduct you; encourage your soul to make this choice.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TENTH MEDITATION. — BY WAY OF ELECTION, AND CHOICE WHICH THE SOUL MAKES OF A DEVOUT LIFE.

PREPARATION.

PLACE yourself in the presence of God. 2. Humble yourself before him, and implore his assistance.

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Imagine yourself again to be in an open field, alone with your good angel; and that you see the devil on your left hand, seated on a lofty throne, attended by many hellish spirits, environed by a numerous band of worldlings, who submissively acknowledge him for their lord, and do him homage, some by one sin, and some by another. Observe the countenances of all the wretched courtiers of this abominable king. Behold some of them transported with hatred, envy, and passion; others killing one another; others consumed with cares, pensive and anxious to heap up riches; others bent upon vanity, unable to obtain any but empty and unprofitable pleasures; others wallow-

ing in the mire, buried and putrified in their brutish affections. Behold, there is no rest, no order, nor decency amongst them. Behold how they despise each other, and love in appearance only. In a word, you shall see a wretched commonwealth, miserably tyrannized over by this cursed king which will move you to compassion.

2. On the right hand, behold Jesus Christ crucified, who, with a cordial love, prays for these poor enslaved people, that they may be freed from the sway of this tyrant; and calls them to himself; behold around him, a band of devout souls with their angels. Contemplate the beauty of this kingdom of devotion. Oh, what a sight! to see this troop of virgins, men and women, whiter than lilies; this assembly of widows, full of holy mortification and humility! See the ranks of divers married people living together with mutual respect, which cannot be without great charity. Behold how these devout souls join the exterior care of the house with the care of the interior, the love of the husband or wife with that of the heavenly Spouse. Consider them all universally, and you shall see them in a holy, sweet, and lovely order, attending on our Lord, whom every one would willingly plant in the midst of his heart. They are joyful; but it is with a comely, charitable, and well-ordered joy; they love each other; but their love is most pure and holy. Such as suffer afflictions amongst this devout people, are perfectly resigned, and never lose courage. To conclude, behold how they look on our Saviour, who comforts them, and how they altogether aspire to him.

3. You have already left Satan, with all his execrable troop, by the good affections you have conceived; but you have not as yet enrolled yourself under the standard of the King Jesus, nor united with his blessed company of devout souls, but you have been hitherto hesitating between the one and the other.

4. The blessed Virgin, with St. Joseph, St. Lewis, St. Monica, and a hundred thousand others, who have lived in the midst of the world, invite and encourage you.

5. The crucified King calls you by name: Come, O my well beloved! come, that I may crown thee!

ELECTION.

O world! O abominable troop! No, never shall you see me under your banners! I have forever abandoned your trifles and vanities. O king of pride! O accursed king! infernal spirit! I renounce thee with all thy vain pomps, I detest thee with all thy works.

2. And, turning myself to thee, my dear Jesus! King of eternal glory and happinness! I embrace thee with all the powers of my soul! I adore thee with my whole heart, and choose thee now and forever for my king; with this inviolable fidelity, I pay thee irrevocable homage, and submit myself to the obedience of thy holy laws and ordinances.

3. O sacred Virgin! beloved Mother! I choose thee for my guide, I put myself under thy protection; I offer thee a particular respect and special reverence.

4. O my good Angel! present me to this sacred

assembly, and forsake me not till I am associated to this blessed company, with whom I say, and will say forever in testimony of my choice, live Jesus, live Jesus!

Our Father. Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW TO MAKE A GENERAL CONFESSION.

BEHOLD here then, my dear Philothea, the meditations necessary for our purpose. When you shall have made them all, proceed courageously in the spirit of humility to make your general confession; but, I beseech you, suffer not yourself to be disturbed with any kind of apprehension. The sting of the scorpion is poisonous; but the scorpion being reduced to oil, becomes a sovereign remedy against the venom of its own sting. Sin is shameful only when we commit it; but, being converted into confession and penance, it becomes honorable and wholesome, — contrition and confession being so beautiful and odoriferous as to efface its deformity and purify its stench. Simon the leper said that Magdalen was a sinner, but our Lord said no, alluding to the sweet perfumes she poured forth, and the greatness of her love. If we be very humble, Philothea, our sins will infinitely displease us, because God is offended by them; but the accusation of them will become

sweet and agreeable, because God is honored thereby; for it is a kind of comfort to acquaint the physician rightly with the nature of the evil that torments us.

2. When you kneel before your spiritual father, imagine that you are on Mount Calvary, under the feet of Jesus Christ crucified, whose precious blood distils on all sides to wash and cleanse you from your iniquities. For, though it be not the very blood of our Saviour, yet it is the merit of his blood shed for us that waters abundantly the soul of the penitent at the confession seat. Open then your heart perfectly, that you may cast out your sins by confession; for, as fast as they depart from your heart, the precious merits of the passion of your Divine Saviour will enter in, to fill it with his graces and blessings.

3. But be sure to declare all with candor and sincerity. Having fully satisfied your conscience that you have done so, listen to the admonitions and ordinances of your confessor, and say in your heart, "Speak Lord! for thy servant heareth."—1 Kings iii. 10. Yea, Philothea, it is God whom you hear; since he has said to his vicegerents, "He that heareth you heareth me."—St. Luke x. 16.

4. Afterwards make the following protestation, which may serve for a conclusion of your contrition, and on which you ought first to have meditated and reflected. Read it attentively, and with as much devotion as you possibly can.

CHAPTER XX.

AN AUTHENTIC PROTESTATION, TO ENGRAVE IN THE SOUL THE RESOLUTION TO SERVE GOD, AND TO CONCLUDE THE ACTS OF PENANCE.

I, N. N., in the presence of the eternal God, and of the whole court of heaven, having considered the infinite mercy of his divine goodness towards me, a most unworthy and wretched creature, whom he has created out of nothing, preserved, supported, and delivered from so many dangers, and loaded with so many benefits; but considering, above all, the incomprehensible sweetness and clemency with which this merciful God has so graciously borne my iniquities; so frequently called upon me and invited me to amendment, and so patiently waited for my repentance and conversion until this present time, notwithstanding the innumerable instances of ingratitude, disloyalty, and infidelity, by which I have despised his grace, rashly offended him, and deferred my conversion from day to day; having, moreover, reflected that upon the day of my holy baptism I was dedicated to God, to be his child; and that, contrary to the profession then made in my name, I have so often, so execrably and detestably, profaned and violated all the powers of my soul and the senses of my body, applying and employing them against his divine majesty; at length, returning to myself, prostrate in spirit before the

throne of the divine justice, I acknowledge, avow, and confess myself lawfully attainted and convicted of treason against God, and guilty of the death and passion of Jesus Christ, on account of the sins I have committed, for which he died and suffered the torment of the cross; so that, consequently, I deserve to be cast away and condemned forever.

But, turning myself towards the throne of the infinite mercy of the same eternal God, having detested with my whole heart and strength the many iniquities of my past life, I most humbly beg pardon, grace, and mercy, with an entire absolution from them, by virtue of the death and passion of this same Lord and Redeemer of my soul, on which relying, as on the only foundation of my hope, I confirm again and renew the sacred profession of allegiance to my God made in my behalf at my baptism; renouncing the devil, the world and the flesh; detesting their base suggestions, vanities, and concupiscences during the residue of my mortal life, and for all eternity. And, turning myself towards my most gracious and merciful God, I desire, purpose, and am irrevocably resolved to serve and love him now and forever; and to this end, I give and consecrate to him my soul with all its powers, my heart with all its affections, and my body with all its senses, protesting that I will never more abuse any part of my being against his divine will and sovereign majesty, to whom I offer up and sacrifice myself in spirit, to be forever his loyal, obedient, and faithful creature, without ever revoking or repenting of this my act and deed.

But if, alas! I should chance, through the suggestion of the enemy, or through human frailty, to transgress in any point, or fail in adhering to this my resolution and dedication, I protest from this moment, and am determined, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, to rise as soon as I shall perceive my fall, and return again to the divine mercy, without any delay whatsoever. This is my inviolable and irrevocable will, intention, and resolution, which I declare and confirm without reservation or exception, in the sacred presence of God, in the sight of the Church triumphant, and in presence of the Church militant, my mother, which hears this my declaration in the person of him who, as her officer, hears me in this action.

May it please thee, O my God! eternal, almighty, and all-gracious Father, Son and Holy Ghost! to confirm in me this resolution, and to accept this inward sacrifice of my heart, in the odor of sweetness. And as it hath pleased thee to inspire me with the will to do this, so grant me the strength and grace to perform it. O my God! thou art my God, the God of my heart, the God of my soul, and the God of my spirit: as such I acknowledge and as such I adore thee now and forever. Live, O Jesus!

CHAPTER XXI.

INFERENCES DRAWN FROM THE FOREGOING PROTESTATION.

HAVING made this protestation, open the ears of your heart to hear the sentence of absolution, which the Saviour of your soul, seated on the throne of his mercy, will pronounce before all the angels and saints in heaven, at the same instant that the priest, in his name, absolves you here upon earth; so that all this blessed company, rejoicing at your conversion, will sing a spiritual canticle with incomparable joy, and each of them give the kiss of peace and fellowship to your heart, now restored to grace and sanctity.

Good God! Philothea! what an admirable contract, what a happy treaty do you here enter into with the divine Majesty! By giving yourself to him, you not only receive himself in exchange, but eternal life also. Nothing, therefore, further remains but cheerfully to sign, with a sincere heart, the act of your protestation; then approach with confidence to the altar, where God will reciprocally sign and seal your absolution, and the promise he makes you of his heavenly kingdom, putting himself, in the blessed sacrament, as a seal or signet upon your renovated heart.

Thus shall your soul, O Philothea! be not only purged from sin, but from the affections thereto. But as these affections easily spring up again in

the soul, as well through the weakness of depraved nature as through concupiscence, which may be mortified, but can never die whilst we dwell in this mortal body, I will give you some instructions, which, if diligently practised, will preserve you so effectually from mortal sin and all affection to it, that they will never find place in your heart hereafter; but, in order that they may contribute to a still more perfect purification, I will previously say something of that absolute purity to which I am desirous of conducting you.

CHAPTER XXII.

THAT WE MUST PURIFY OURSELVES FROM AFFECTION TO VENIAL SINS.

AS at the approach of daylight we perceive more clearly in a mirror the spots and stains that disfigure our faces, so, as the inward light of the Holy Spirit more and more enlightens our consciences, we see in a more distinct and clear manner the sins, inclinations, and imperfections which prevent us from attaining to true devotion, and the same light which enables us to perceive those spots and blemishes inflames us with a desire to cleanse and purify ourselves from them.

You will, then, discover, my dear Philothea, that, besides mortal sins and the affection to them, from which you have been purified by the fore-

going exercises, there still remain in your soul several inclinations and affections to venial sins. I do not say that you shall discover the venial sins themselves, but your affections and inclinations to them; because the one is very different from the other; for although we can never be altogether so pure from venial sins as to continue for a long time without committing *them*, yet we need not entertain any voluntary affection for *them*. Surely it is one thing to tell a lie now and then in jest, or in matters of small importance, and another to take pleasure in lying, and retain an *affection for it* on every occasion.

I therefore say that we must purge the soul from every affection to venial sins; that is to say, we must not voluntarily nourish the desire of persevering in any kind of venial sin, be it ever so small; because it displeases God, though not to that degree as to cause him to cast us off or damn us for it. Now, if venial sin offends him, the will and affection which we retain to venial sin is no better than a resolution to entertain the desire of displeasing his divine Majesty; but is it possible that a generous soul should not only consent to offend her God, but also to retain with affection the desire of offending him?

Such affections, Philothea, are as directly opposite to devotion as an affection to mortal sin is contrary to charity; they depress and weaken the spirit, prevent divine consolations, open the gate to temptations, and although they kill not, yet they make the soul extremely sick. "Dying flies," says the wise man, "spoil the sweetness of the oint-

ment." — Eccles. x. 1. His meaning is, that flies which stay not long upon the ointment, but only taste it in passing by, spoil no more than they take, the rest remaining sound; but those which die in the ointment, deprive it of its sweetness. Thus venial sins, which come upon a devout soul, and stay not long there, do it no great damage; but if they dwell in it by affection, they make it lose the sweetness of ointment, that is, holy devotion.

Spiders kill not the bees, but they spoil and corrupt their honey, and so entangle the honey-combs with their web that the bees cannot go forward in their work; now this is to be understood when the spiders make any stay among them. In like manner, venial sin kills not the soul, but it spoils devotion and entangles the powers of the soul so much with bad habits and vicious inclinations, that she can no longer exert that promptitude of charity in which devotion consists, but this also is to be understood, when venial sin continues to dwell in our hearts, by the affection with which we cherish it.

It is not a matter of great consequence, Philothea, to tell some trifling lie, to fall into some little irregularity in words, in actions, in looks, in dress, in mirth, in play, in dancing, provided that as soon as these spiritual spiders are entered into our conscience we chase and drive them away, as the bees do the corporal spiders; but if we permit them to remain in our hearts, if we cherish the desire of retaining and multiplying them, we shall soon find our honey destroyed, and the hive of our conscience corrupted and ruined. But I say once

more, what probability is there that a generous soul should take pleasure in displeasing her God, or affect what would be disagreeable to him, or willingly do that which she knows would give him offence?

CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT WE OUGHT TO PURIFY OURSELVES FROM AN AFFECTION TO UNPROFITABLE AMUSEMENTS.

PLAY, dancing, feasting, dress, and theatrical shows, being things which, considered in their substance, are not evil, but indifferent, and such as may be used either well or ill; nevertheless, as all these things are dangerous, to bear an affection to them is still more dangerous. I say then, Philothea, that although it be lawful to play, to dance, to dress, to feast, or to be present at innocent comedies,[1] yet to have an affection to such things is not only contrary to devotion, but also extremely hurtful and dangerous. The evil does not consist in doing such things, but in a fond attachment to them. Ah, what a pity to sow, in the soil of our heart, such vain and foolish affections, which take up the room of good impressions, and hinder the

[1] It is not the meaning of the saint in this passage to justify the assisting at any such comedies, or other plays, as have a tendency to encourage vice, or irreligion; or which serve to inflame the passions, to enervate the soul, and to dispose her to impure love, which is too often the case with our modern plays. For such as these the holy prelate would by no means allow to be innocent, but rather would loudly condemn them, as the holy fathers and saints have always done.

sap of our soul from being employed in good inclinations!

Thus the ancient Nazareans abstained not only from whatever might inebriate, but also from the grape itself; not from an apprehension that the grape could intoxicate them, but lest by tasting the grape they might be tempted to drink of the wine also. Now, I do not say that we can never use these dangerous things, but I affirm that we can never set our affections upon them without prejudice to devotion. As the stags, when grown too fat, retire into their thickets, because, being encumbered with flesh, they know that they are not in a condition to run, should they be hunted, so the heart of man, burdening itself with these unprofitable, superfluous, and dangerous affections, cannot certainly run after its God, the true point of devotion, readily, lightly, and easily. Let children please and fatigue themselves with pursuing butterflies, yet no one finds fault with them, because they are children; but is it not ridiculous, or rather lamentable, to see persons advanced in years fix their heart and affections upon such toys and trifles as those which I have named, which are not only unprofitable, but which put us in imminent danger of falling into many irregularities and disorders in the pursuit of them? Wherefore, my dear Philothea, I say, we must purge ourselves from these affections; for though the acts are not always contrary to devotion, yet the affections are always prejudicial to it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THAT WE MUST PURGE OURSELVES FROM OUR EVIL INCLINATIONS.

WE have, moreover, Philothea, certain natural inclinations, which, though they spring from our particular sins, yet are not properly sins, either mortal or venial, but are called imperfections; and the acts which proceed from them are termed defects and failings. For example, St. Paula, according to St. Jerom, had so great an inclination to sadness that at the death of her children and husband she was in danger of dying with grief. This was an imperfection, but not a sin, because she had it against her will.

There are some people who are naturally of a light, others of a morose temper; some of an obstinate disposition, others inclined to indignation; some prone to anger, others to love; in short, there are few in whom we may not observe some of these imperfections. Now, although they are peculiar and natural to each of us, yet by care and a contrary affection, we may not only correct and moderate them, but even altogether free ourselves from them; and I tell you, Philothea, it is necessary that you should do so. As a means has been discovered to change bitter almond trees into sweet, by piercing them at the bottom to let out the juice, why may not we let out the juice of our perverse inclinations, and become better? For as there is no nature, though never so good, which

may not be perverted to evil by vicious habits, so there is no disposition, though never so perverse, that may not, by the grace of God and our own industry, be brought under and overcome.

Wherefore, I shall now proceed to give you such instructions, and propose such exercises as may help to purge your soul, as well from your imperfections as from all dangerous affection to venial sins, and secure your conscience more effectually against all mortal sin. May God grant you the grace to reduce them to practice!

Part Second.

CONTAINING VARIOUS INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELEVATING THE SOUL TO GOD BY PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

PRAYER places our understanding in the brightness and light of God, and exposes our will to the heat of heavenly love. There is nothing that so effectually purges our understanding from its ignorance, or our will from its depraved affections, as prayer. It is the water of benediction, which makes the plants of our good desires grow green and flourish, which washes our souls from their imperfections, and quenches the thirst of passion in our hearts.

But, above all, I recommend to you mental prayer, or the prayer of the heart, and particularly that which has for its object the life and passion of our Lord. By making him the frequent subject of your meditation, your whole soul will be replenished with him; you will imbibe his spirit, and frame all your actions according to the model of his. As he is the light of the world, it is then in him, by him, and for him, that we ought to acquire lustre, and be enlightened. He is the

tree of desire, under whose shadow we ought to refresh ourselves. He is the living fountain of Jacob, in which we may wash away all our stains. In fine, as little children, by hearing their mothers talk, lisp at first, and learn at length to speak their language, so we, by keeping close to our Saviour, by meditation and observing his words, actions, and affections, shall, by the help of his grace, learn to speak, to act, and to will like him. Here we must stop, Philothea, as we cannot find access to God the Father, but through this gate; for, as the mirror could never terminate our sight, if the back of it were not tinned or leaded, so we could never contemplate the divinity in this world, had we not been united to the sacred humanity of our Saviour, whose life and death is the most delightful, sweet, and profitable object we can select for our ordinary meditation. It is not without reason that our Saviour called himself the bread that came down from heaven; for, as bread is to be eaten with all sorts of meat, so our Saviour should be the subject of our meditation, consideration, and imitation, in all our prayers and actions. His life and death have been for this purpose disposed and distributed into distinct points, by several authors. Those whom I recommend to you are, St. Bonaventure, Bellintani, Bruno, Capilia, Granada, and Du Pont.

Employ an hour every day, before dinner, in this spiritual exercise, or, if convenient, early in the morning, when your mind will be less distracted, and more fresh after the repose of the night; but see that you extend it not beyond an

hour, except with the advice of your spiritual director.

If you could perform this exercise in the church, it would be the most proper and commodious place possible, because neither father nor mother, wife nor husband, nor any one else, could well prevent you from spending one hour in the church; whereas, being, perhaps, under their subjection, you could not promise yourself so much leisure at home.

Begin all your prayers, whether mental or vocal, with a lively sense of the presence of God. By attending strictly to this rule, you will soon become sensible of its salutary effects.

If you follow my advice, Philothea, you will say your *Pater*, *Ave*, and *Credo* in Latin; but at the same time learn perfectly to comprehend the meaning of the words in your native tongue, that, whilst you unite with the faithful in prayer, in the common language of the Church, you may at the same time relish the delicious sense of those holy and admirable prayers. Pray with your attention fixed, and your affections excited by the sense of the words; pray deliberately and from your heart; for, believe me, only one *Our Father*, said with feeling and affection, is of infinitely more worth and value than ever so great a number run over in haste.

The recitation of the Beads or Rosary, is a most profitable way of praying, provided you know how to say them properly; to this end, procure one of those little books which teach the manner of reciting them. It is good also, to

say the litanies of our Lord Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, and of the Saints, and other vocal prayers, which may be found in approved manuals. If, however, you have the gift of mental prayer, you should always give it the preference, so that if, either through multiplicity of business, or some other cause, you cannot say your vocal prayers, you must not be troubled on that account, but rest contended with saying, either before or after your meditation, the *Pater*, *Ave*, and *Credo*.

If, whilst at vocal prayer, you feel your heart inclined to mental prayer, refuse not the invitation, but let your mind turn gently that way, without being concerned at not finishing the vocal prayers you purpose to say; for the choice you have made is more pleasing to God, and more profitable to your soul; with this exception however, that if you are bound to say the office of the Church, you must fulfil your obligation.

Should it happen, through a pressure of business, or some accidental cause, that your morning should pass away without allowing you leisure for the exercise of mental prayer, endeavor to repair this loss at some remote hour after dinner; because by doing it immediately after, before digestion is advanced, besides being heavy and drowsy, you will injure your health.

But if, in the whole course of the day, you can find no leisure for this heavenly exercise, you may in some measure make amends by multiplying your ejaculatory prayers, reading some book of devotion, or performing some penance, which

may prevent the ill consequences attending this failure; and make a firm resolution to repair your loss the following day.

CHAPTER II.

A SHORT METHOD FOR MEDITATION; AND FIRST OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE FIRST POINT OF THE PREPARATION.

BUT perhaps, Philothea, you know not how to pray mentally, for it is a thing with which few in our age are so happy as to be acquainted. I therefore present you with the following short and plain method, till, by custom, or reading some of the good books which have been composed on this subject, you may be more fully instructed.

I shall begin with the preparation, which consists in placing yourself in the presence of God, and imploring his assistance. Now, to assist you to place yourself in the presence of God, I shall set before you four principal means. The first consists in a lively and attentive apprehension of his presence, in all things and in every place; for there is not a place in the world in which he is not truly present; so that as birds, wherever they fly, always meet with the air, so we, wherever we go, or wherever we are, shall always find God present.

Every one acknowledges this truth; but few consider it with a lively attention. Blind men,

who see not their prince, though present among them, behave themselves, nevertheless, with respect, when they are told of his presence; but the fact is, because they see him not, they easily forget that he is present, and, having forgotten it, they still more easily lose their respect for him. Alas, Philothea, we do not see God, who is present with us; and, though faith assures us of his presence, yet, not beholding him with our eyes, we too often forget him, and behave ourselves as though he were at a distance from us; for, although we well know that he is present in all things, yet, not reflecting on it, we act as if we knew it not. Therefore, before prayer, we must always excite in our souls a lively apprehension of the presence of God, such as David conceived when he exclaimed: "If I ascend up into heaven, O my God, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art there!" — Ps. cxxxviii. And thus we should use the words of Jacob, who having seen the sacred ladder, said: "Oh, how terrible is this place! Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." — Gen. xxxviii., meaning that he did not reflect on his presence, for he could not be ignorant that God was present everywhere. When, therefore, you come to prayer, you must say with your whole heart, and in your heart: "O my heart! be attentive, for God is truly here."

The second means to place yourself in his sacred presence, is to reflect that God is not only in the place in which you are, but that he is, in a most particular manner, in your heart; nay, in

the very centre of your spirit, which he enlivens and animates by his divine presence, being there as the heart of your heart, and the spirit of your spirit; for, as the soul, being diffused through the whole body, is present in every part thereof, and yet resides in a special manner in the heart, so likewise God is present to all things, yet he resides in a more particular manner in our spirit; for which reason David calls him "the God of his heart." — Ps. lxxii. And St. Paul says, "that it is in God we live, and we move, and we are." — Acts xvii. In consideration, therefore, of this truth, excite in your heart a profound reverence towards God, who is there so intimately present.

A third means is to consider our Saviour in his humanity looking down from heaven on all mankind, but especially on Christians, who are his children; and more particularly on such as are at prayer, whose actions and behavior he minutely observes. This is by no means a mere flight of the imagination, but a most certain truth; for although we see him not, yet it is true that he beholds us from above. It was thus that St. Stephen saw him at the time of his martyrdom. So that we may truly say with the Spouse: "Behold he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices." — Cantic. ii.

A fourth method consists in making use of the imagination, by representing to ourselves our Saviour in his sacred humanity, as if he were near us, as we sometimes imagine a friend to be present, saying, "Methinks I see him," or something of the

kind. But when you are before the Blessed Sacrament, this presence is real and not imaginary, since we must consider the species and appearance of bread only as a tapestry behind which our Lord, being really present, observes us, though we cannot actually see him. Employ then some of these four means of placing yourself in the presence of God before prayer, not all at once, but one at a time, in as concise and simple a manner as possible.

CHAPTER III.

OF INVOCATION, THE SECOND POINT OF THE PREPARATION.

BEING sensible that you are in the presence of God, prostrate yourself before him with the most profound reverence, acknowledging yourself unworthy to appear before so sovereign a majesty; yet knowing that it is his divine will that you should do so, implore his grace to serve and worship him in this meditation. For this end you may use some short and inflamed aspirations, such as these words of David: "Cast me not, O God! away from thy face; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant, and I will consider the wondrous things of thy law. Give me understanding, and I will search thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart. I am thy servant; give me understanding." — Ps.

c. viii. I would also advise you to invoke your guardian angel, as well as the holy saints who were concerned in the mystery on which you meditate. For example, in meditating on the death of our Lord, you may invoke the Blessed Virgin, St. John, St. Mary Magdalen, and the good thief, begging that the holy affections which they then conceived may be communicated to you. Also, in meditating on your own death you may invoke your good angel, who will then be with you, beseeching him to inspire you with proper considerations; and so of other mysteries.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE THIRD POINT OF PREPARATION, WHICH CONSISTS IN PROPOSING THE SUBJECT OF THE MYSTERY ON WHICH WE INTEND TO MEDITATE.

AFTER these two general points of the preparation, there remains a third, which is not common to every kind of meditation, and which consists in representing to your imagination the whole of the mystery on which you desire to meditate, as if it really passed in your presence. For example, if you meditate on the crucifixion of our Lord, imagine that you are on Mount Calvary, and that you there behold and hear all that was done or said at the time of our Lord's passion; or, if you prefer it, imagine that they are crucify-

ing our Saviour in the very place in which you are, in the manner described by the holy evangelists.

The same rule is to be observed when you meditate on death, or hell, or any mystery in which visible and sensible objects form a part of the subject; but as to other mysteries, such, for example, as relate to the greatness of God, the excellency of virtue, the end for which we were created, etc., which are invisible things, we cannot make use of the imagination. We may, it is true, use some similitude or comparison to assist us in the consideration of these subjects, but this is attended with some difficulty; and my intention is to instruct you in so plain and easy a manner, that your mind may be at perfect ease. By means of the imagination we confine our mind within the mystery on which we meditate, that it may not ramble to and fro, just as we shut up a bird in a cage, or tie a hawk by her leash, that she may rest on the hand. Some may perhaps tell you that it is better to use the simple thought of faith, and to conceive the subject in a manner altogether mental and spiritual in the representation of these mysteries, or else to imagine that the things take place in your own soul. But this method is too subtile for beginners; therefore, until it shall please God to raise you higher, I advise you, Philothea, to remain in the low valley which I have shown you.

CHAPTER V.

OF CONSIDERATIONS WHICH FORM THE SECOND PART OF MEDITATION.

AFTER the act of the imagination follows meditation, or the act of the understanding, which consists in making reflections and considerations, in order to raise up our affections to God and heavenly things. Hence meditation must not be confounded with study or other thoughts or reflections which have not the love of God or our spiritual welfare for their object; but something else, as, for example, to acquire learning and knowledge, to write or dispute. Having, then, as I have already said, confined your mind within the limits of the subject on which you desire to meditate, either by means of the imagination, if the matter be sensible, or otherwise by a simple proposal of it, begin to form considerations on it according to the models I have proposed to you in the foregoing meditations. Should you relish the fruit of any one of them, occupy yourself without going further, like the bees, who never quit the flower so long as they can extract any honey from it. But if, upon trial, you succeed not with one consideration, according to your wishes, proceed to another, calmly, tranquilly, without hurrying yourself or fatiguing your mind.

CHAPTER VI.

OF AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS, THE THIRD PART OF MEDITATION.

MEDITATION produces pious motions in the will, or affective part of our soul, such as the love of God and our neighbor; a desire of heaven and eternal glory; zeal for the salvation of souls; imitation of the life of our Lord; compassion, admiration, joy; the fear of God's displeasure, of judgment, and of hell; hatred of sin, confidence in the goodness and mercy of God, and confusion for the sins of our past life. In these affections our hearts should expand as much as possible. You will be greatly assisted in this part of meditation by reading the preface to the first volume of the meditations of Dom Andrew Capilia, where he shows the manner of forming these affections, as Father Arias does more at large in his second part of his treatise on prayer.

Yet you must not, however, Philothea, dwell upon these general reflections without determining to reduce them to special and particular resolutions. For example: the first word that our Lord spoke on the cross will doubtless excite in your soul a desire to pardon and love your enemies. But this will avail you little if you add not to the desire a practical resolution saying: "Well, then, I will not hereafter be offended at what this or that person may say of me, nor resent any affront

he may offer me; but, on the contrary, I will embrace every opportunity to gain his affection, and to appease him." By this means, Philothea, you will correct your faults in a short time; whereas by affections only, your amendment will be but slow, and attended with great difficulty.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE CONCLUSION AND SPIRITUAL NOSEGAY.

LAST of all, we must conclude our meditation by forming three acts, which must be done with the utmost humility. The first is to return thanks to God for the good affections and resolutions with which he has inspired us, and for his goodness and mercy, which we have discovered in the mystery of the meditation. The second is to offer our affections and resolutions to his goodness and mercy, in union with the death, the blood, and the virtues of his Divine Son. The third is to conjure God to communicate to us the graces and virtues of his Son, and to bless our affections and resolutions, that we may faithfully reduce them to practice. We then pray for the Church, our pastors, friends, and others, imploring for that end the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and of the angels and saints; and, lastly, as I have already observed, we conclude by saying *Our Father*, and *Hail Mary*.

which are the general and necessary prayers of all the faithful.

Besides all this, as I have already told you, you must gather a little nosegay of devotion. One who has been walking in a beautiful garden, departs not willingly without gathering a few flowers to smell during the remainder of the day; thus ought we, when our soul has been entertaining itself by meditating on some mystery, to select one, or two, or three of those points in which we have found most relish, and which are most proper for our advancement, to think frequently on them, and smell them as it were spiritually during the course of the day. This is to be done in the place in which we have been meditating, either remaining there in silence, or walking by ourselves for some time after.

CHAPTER VIII.

CERTAIN PROFITABLE ADVICES ON THE SUBJECT OF MEDITATION.

ABOVE all things, Philothea, when you rise from meditation, remember the resolutions you have taken, and, as the occasion offers, carefully reduce them to practice that very day. This is the great fruit of meditation, without which it is not only unprofitable, but frequently hurtful; for virtues meditated upon, and not practised, often puff up the spirit, and make us

imagine that we really are such as we resolve to be, which doubtless is true, when our resolutions are lively and solid; now they are not so, but, on the contrary, vain and dangerous when they are not reduced to practice. We must, therefore, by all means, seek every occasion, little or great, of putting them in execution. For example: if I have resolved by mildness to gain the hearts of such as offend me, I will seek this very day an opportunity to meet them, and salute them kindly; or, if I should not meet them, at least to speak well of them, and pray to God in their behalf.

After prayer, be careful not to agitate your heart, lest you spill the precious balm it has received. My meaning is, that you must, for some time, if possible, remain in silence, and gently remove your heart from prayer to your other employments; retaining, as long as you can, a feeling of the affections which you have conceived. A man who has received some precious liquor in a vase of porcelain, in carrying it home walks gently, not looking aside, but generally before him, for fear of stumbling, and sometimes upon his dish, for fear of spilling the liquor. Thus ought you to act when you finish your meditation; suffer nothing to distract you, but look forward with caution; or, to speak more plainly, should you meet with any one with whom you are obliged to enter into conversation, there is no other remedy but to watch over your heart, that as little of the liquor of holy prayer as possible may be spilt on the occasion.

You must even accustom yourself to know how to pass from prayer to those occupations which your state of life lawfully requires, though ever so foreign from the affections which you have received in prayer. Thus the lawyer must learn to pass from prayer to pleading; the merchant, to commerce; and the married woman, to the care of her family, with so much ease and tranquillity that their minds may not be disturbed; for, since prayer and the duties of your state of life are both in conformity with the will of God, you must learn to pass from the one to the other in the spirit of humility and devotion.

You must also know that it may sometimes happen that immediately after the preparation, you will feel your affections moved towards God. In this case, Philothea, you must yield to the attraction, and cease to follow the method I have before given; for, although, generally speaking, consideration precedes affections and resolutions, yet when the Holy Ghost gives you the latter before the former, you must not then seek the former, since it is used for no other purpose than to excite the latter. In a word, whenever affections present themselves, we must expand our hearts to make room for them, whether they come before or after considerations; and, although I have placed them after the considerations, I have done so merely to distinguish more plainly the parts of prayer, for otherwise it is a general rule never to restrain the affections, but to let them have their free course whenever they present themselves. This must be observed even with respect to

thanksgiving, oblation, and petition, which may likewise be used in the midst of the considerations, for they must be restrained no more than the other affections; though afterwards, for the conclusion of the meditation, they must be repeated. But as for resolutions, they are always to be made after the affections, and immediately before the conclusion of the whole meditation; because, as in these we represent to ourselves particular and familiar objects, they would put us in danger of distractions should we mingle them with our affections.

While we are forming our affections and resolutions it is advisable to use colloquies, and to speak, sometimes to our Lord, sometimes to the angels and the persons represented in the mysteries; to the saints, to ourselves, to our own heart, to sinners, and even to insensible creatures; after the example of David in his psalms, and of other saints in their prayers and meditations.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE DRYNESS WHICH WE SOMETIMES EXPERIENCE IN MEDITATION.

SHOULD it happen, Philothea, that you feel no relish or comfort in meditation, I conjure you not to disturb yourself on that account; but sometimes open the door of your heart to vocal

prayer, complain of yourself to our Lord, confess your unworthiness, and beseech him to assist you. Kiss your crucifix if you have it at hand, saying to him those words of Jacob, "I will not let thee go, O Lord! till thou hast given me thy blessing," or those of the Cananean woman, "Yea, Lord! I am a dog; but yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

At other times, take up some spiritual book, and read it with attention till your affections are moved, or endeavor to excite fervor in your heart by some posture of exterior devotion, such as prostrating yourself on the ground, crossing your hands before your breast, or embracing a crucifix; provided you be alone or in some private place. But if, after all, you should receive no comfort, be not disturbed, no matter how excessive the dryness may be; but continue to remain in a devout posture in the presence of God. How many courtiers enter a hundred times a year into the prince's presence-chamber without hopes of speaking to him, but merely to be seen by him, and to pay him their homage. So ought we, my dear Philothea, to come to holy prayer, purely and merely to pay our homage, and testify our fidelity to God. Should it please his divine Majesty to speak to us and entertain himself with us by his holy inspirations and interior consolations, it would certainly be an honor above our merits, and the source of the sweetest consolation; but should it not please him to grant us this favor, but leave us without taking any more notice of us than as if we were not in his presence, we must not therefore depart, but con-

tinue with respect and devotion in presence of his adorable Majesty. Observing our diligence, our patience, and perseverance, he will, when we come again before him, favor us with his consolations, and make us experience the sweetness of his holy prayer. Yet, if he should not do so, let us assure ourselves, Philothea, that we are highly honored by being permitted to appear in his presence.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE MORNING EXERCISE.

BESIDES your daily meditation, and the vocal prayers which you ought to say once every day, there are five other shorter exercises which are, as it were, branches of the principal prayer; the first is morning prayer, intended as a general preparation to all the actions of the day, which may be made in the following manner.

1. Adore God most profoundly, and return him thanks for having preserved you from the dangers of the night, and if, during the course of it, you have committed any sin, implore his pardon.

2. Consider that the present day is given you in order that you may gain the future day of eternity; make a firm purpose, therefore, to employ it well with this intention.

3. Foresee in what business or conversation you will probably be engaged; what opportunities you

will have to serve God; to what temptations of offending him you will be exposed, either by anger, by vanity, or any other irregularity, and prepare yourself by a firm resolution to make the best use of those means which shall be offered you to serve God, and advance in devotion; as also, on the other hand, dispose yourself carefully to avoid, resist, and overcome whatever may present itself that is prejudicial to your salvation and the glory of God. Now, it is not sufficient to make this resolution unless you also prepare the means of reducing it to practice. For example: if I foresee that I am to treat of any business with one that is passionate, and easily provoked to anger, I will not only resolve to refrain from giving him any offence, but will also prepare words of meekness to prevent his anger, or use the assistance of some person that may keep him in temper. If I foresee that I shall have an opportunity of visiting some sick person, I will determine the hour of the visit, the comforts and assistances I may afford him; and so of the rest.

4. This done, humble yourself in the presence of God, acknowledging that, of yourself, you are incapable of executing your resolutions, either to avoid evil, or to do good; and, as if you held your heart in your hands, offer it, together with all your good designs, to his divine Majesty, beseeching him to take it under his protection, and so to strengthen it that it may proceed prosperously in his service, using these or the like words interiorly: "Behold, O Lord! this poor, miserable heart of mine, which, through thy goodness, has conceived

many good affections, but which, alas! is of itself so weak and wretched, that it is incapable of executing the good which it desires, unless thou impart to it thy heavenly blessing, which for this end I humbly beg of thee, O merciful Father! through the merits of the passion of thy Son, to whose honor I consecrate this day, and all the remaining days of my life." Then invoke the Blessed Virgin, your good angel, and the saints, that they may all assist you by their intercession.

But all these spiritual acts must be made briefly and fervently, and before you depart from your chamber, if it be possible, that by means of this prayer, all that you are to do throughout the whole day may be sanctified by the blessing of God; and I beg of you, Philothea, never to omit this exercise.

CHAPTER XI.

OF THE EVENING EXERCISE, AND THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

AS before dinner you have made a spiritual repast by means of meditation, so before supper, you must make a devout spiritual collation. Take then some little opportunity, before supper, to prostrate yourself before God, and recollect yourself in the presence of Jesus Christ crucified, whom you may represent to yourself by a single consideration, and an interior glance of the eye,

and rekindle in your heart the fire of your morning meditation by some lively aspirations, some acts of humility and love which you will make towards this divine Saviour of your soul; or else, by repeating the points of your morning meditation which affected you most, or by exciting yourself up to devotion by some new spiritual subject, as you may prefer.

As to the examination of conscience, which must be always made before you retire to rest, every one knows how it is to be performed. 1. We give thanks to God for having preserved us during the day past. 2. We examine how we have behaved ourselves throughout the whole course of it; and to do this more easily, we may consider where we have been, with whom, and in what business we have been employed. 3. If we find that we have done any good, we must thank God for it; or if, on the other hand, we have done any evil, whether in thought, word, or deed, we must ask pardon of his divine Majesty, firmly resolving to confess it at the first opportunity, and to avoid it for the future. 4. We afterwards recommend to the protection of divine Providence our soul and body, the Holy Church, together with our parents and friends; and, finally, we beg the Blessed Virgin, our angel guardian, and all the saints, to watch over us and pray for us; and thus, with the blessing of God, we go to take that rest which his will has appointed for us.

This exercise, as well as that of the morning, must never be forgotten; since by that you open the windows of your soul to the Sun of Justice:

and by this you close them against the darkness of hell.

CHAPTER XII.

OF SPIRITUAL RECOLLECTION.

IT is to this point, my dear Philothea, that I wish to draw your particular attention, since in it consists one of the most assured means of your spiritual advancement.

Recollect as often as you can, in the course of the day, by any of the four ways I have marked out for you, that you stand in the presence of God; observe what he does, and what you are doing, and you shall find his eyes perpetually fixed upon you with an inconceivable love. Then say to him: "O my God! why do I not turn my eyes towards thee, as thou always lookest on me? Why dost thou think incessantly on me, O my Lord? and why do I so seldom think on thee? Where are we, O my soul? Our true place of rest is God, and where do we find ourselves?"

As birds have their nests on trees, to which they occasionally retire, and the deer, bushes and thickets, in which they conceal themselves and enjoy the cool shade in the heat of summer, so shall we, Philothea, choose some place every day, either on Mount Calvary, or in the wounds of our Lord, or in some other place near him, as a retreat to which we may occasionally retire to refresh

and recreate ourselves amidst our exterior occupations; and there, as in a stronghold, defend ourselves against temptations. Blessed is he that can say with truth to our Lord: "Thou art my place of strength and my refuge, my defence from storms, and my shadow from the heat."—Ps. lxx. 3; Isai. xxv. 4.

Remember then, Philothea, to retire occasionally into the solitude of your heart while you are outwardly engaged in business or conversation. This mental solitude cannot be prevented by the multitude of those who surround you; for, as they are not about your heart, but your body, your heart may remain in the presence of God alone. This was the exercise which the holy King David practised amidst his various occupations, as he testifies in the following, as well as in several other places of his psalms: "O Lord! as for me, I am always with thee. I beheld the Lord always before me. I have lifted up my eyes to thee, O my God! who dwellest in heaven. My eyes are always toward God." And indeed our occupations are seldom so serious as to prevent us from withdrawing our heart occasionally from them, in order to retire into this divine solitude.

When the parents of St. Catharine of Sienna had deprived her of the opportunity of a place, and of leisure to pray and meditate, our Lord directed her, by his inspirations, to make a little interior oratory within her soul, into which, retiring mentally, she might, amidst her exterior occupations, enjoy this holy spiritual solitude; and when the world afterwards assaulted her, she

received no inconvenience from it, because, as she said, she had shut herself up in her interior closet, where she comforted herself with her heavenly Spouse. From her own experience of the utility of this exercise, she afterwards counselled her spiritual children to practise it.

Withdraw, then, your thoughts, from time to time, into your heart, where, separated from all men, you may familiarly treat with God on the affairs of your soul. Say with David: "I watched and am become like a pelican of the wilderness. I am like a night raven in the house. I have watched, and am become as a sparrow, all alone on the house-top."— Ps. cl. These words not only inform us that this great king spent some solitary hours in the contemplation of spiritual things, but they also point out, in a mystical sense, three excellent retreats or hermitages, in which we may imitate the solitude of our Saviour, who on Mount Calvary was likened to the pelican of the wilderness, which nourishes and gives life to her young ones with her own blood; in his nativity, in a desolate stable, to the night raven in a ruinous building, mourning and weeping for our offences and sins; and, at his accession, to the sparrow flying up to heaven, which is, as it were, the house-top of the world. In these three solitudes we may make our spiritual retreats, even amidst the turmoils of our exterior employments. Blessed Elzear, Count of Arian in Provence, having been long absent from his devout and chaste Delphina, she sent an express to him to inquire after his health, by whom he returned this answer:

"I am very well, my dear spouse; but if you desire to see me, seek me in the wound of the side of our sweet Saviour; for, as it is there only that I dwell, it is there that you shall find me; if you seek me elsewhere, you will search in vain." This was a Christian nobleman indeed.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF ASPIRATIONS, EJACULATORY PRAYERS, AND GOOD THOUGHTS

WE retire into God because we aspire to him; and we aspire to him that we may retire into him, so that aspirations to God, and spiritual retirement are the mutual support of each other, and both proceed from the same source, viz., devout and pious thoughts.

Make, then, Philothea, frequent aspirations to God by short but ardent motions of your heart; admire his beauty; implore his assistance; cast yourself in spirit at the foot of the cross; adore his goodness; converse with him frequently on the affairs of your salvation; present your soul to him a thousand times a day; contemplate his clemency and his sweetness; stretch out your hand to him, as a little child to his father, that he may conduct you; place him in your bosom, like a fragrant nosegay; plant him in your soul, like a standard, and make a thousand different motions of your heart, to enkindle and excite within your-

self a passionate and tender affection for your divine Spouse. Ejaculatory prayer was strenuously recommended by the great St. Austin to the devout Lady Proba. Philothea, our mind, by habituating itself thus privately to the company and familiarity of our God, will be altogether perfumed with his perfections. Now there is no difficulty in this exercise, as it may be intermixed with our other occupations, without any inconvenience whatever, since in these spiritual and interior aspirations we only make short deviations, which, instead of preventing, rather assist us in the pursuit of the object which we have in view. The pilgrim, though he stops to take a little wine to refresh himself, interrupts not his journey by doing so, but, on the contrary, acquires new strength to finish it with more ease and expedition, resting only that he may afterwards proceed the faster.

Many have collected a store of vocal aspirations, which may be very profitable; but I would advise you not to confine yourself to any set form of words, but to pronounce, either with your heart or mouth, such as love, without any study, shall suggest to you; for it will furnish you with as many as you can desire. It is true there are certain words which have a peculiar force to satisfy the heart in this respect. Such as the aspirations interspersed so copiously throughout the Psalms of David; the frequent invocations of the name of Jesus; the ejaculations of love expressed in the Canticles, etc. Spiritual songs will also answer the same purpose when sung with attention.

They who love with a human and natural affection have their thoughts and hearts incessantly engaged by the object of their passion, and their mouth ever employed in its praise. When absent, they lose no opportunity of testifying their affection by letters, and meet not a tree, on the bark of which they do not inscribe the name of their beloved. Thus, such as truly love God can never cease to think on him, breathe for him, aspire to him, and speak of him; and, were it possible, they would engrave the sacred name of Jesus on the breasts of all mankind.

To this all things invite them, as there is no creature that does not declare to them the praises of their beloved; and as St. Austin says, after St. Anthony, everything in the world addresses them in a silent, yet very intelligible language, in favor of their love. All things excite them to good thoughts, which give birth to many animated motions and aspirations of the soul to God. Behold some examples.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, walking on the seashore, observed how the waves, advancing upon the beach, left behind them shells and little periwinkles, stalks of weeds, small oysters, and the like, which the sea had cast upon the shore, and then, returning with other waves, took part of them back, and swallowed them up again, whilst the adjoining rocks continued firm and immovable, though the billows beat against them with so much violence. Upon which he made this salutary reflection: that feeble souls, like shells and stalks of weeds, suffer themselves to be borne away, some

times by affliction, and at other times by consolation, at the mercy of the inconstant billows of fortune; but that courageous souls continue firm and unmoved under all kinds of storms; and from this thought he proceeded to those aspirations of David (Ps. lxviii.): "Save me, O God! for the waters are come in even unto my soul. O Lord! deliver me out of these deep waters; I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me:" for at that time he was in affliction for the unhappy usurpation of his bishopric attempted by Maxmius.

St. Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspa, being present at a general assembly of the Roman nobility, when Theodoric, king of the Goths, made an oration to them, and beholding the splendor of so many great lords, ranked each according to his quality, exclaimed: "O God! how glorious and beautiful must the heavenly Jerusalem be, since earthly Rome appears in so much pomp! for, if in this world the lovers of vanity be permitted to shine so bright, what must that glory be which is reserved in the next world for the lovers and contemplators of verity!"

St. Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, by whose birth our mountains have been highly honored, was admirable in the application of good thoughts. As this holy prelate was proceeding on a journey, a hare pursued by hounds ran under his horse, as to a place of refuge, suggested by the imminent danger of death; whilst the hounds, barking around, durst not attempt to violate the sanctuary to which their prey had taken recourse. A sight so very

extraordinary made the whole company burst into a fit of laughter; but the saint, weeping and sighing, cried out: "Alas! you laugh, but the poor beast does not laugh; the enemies of the soul, after hunting and driving her on, through various turnings and windings, into every kind of sin, lie in wait for her at the narrow passage of death, to catch and devour her; but she, being terrified, looks for succor and refuge on every side; and if she find none, her enemies mock and deride her." When the saint had thus spoken, he rode on sighing.

Constantine the Great wrote with respect to St. Anthony; at which the religious about him being greatly surprised, "Why," said he "are you astonished that a king should write to a man? Be astonished rather that the eternal God has written his law to mortal men; nay, more, has spoken to them by word of mouth, in the person of his Son."

St. Francis seeing a sheep alone amidst a flock of goats, "Observe," said he to his companion, "the poor sheep, how mild it is amidst the goats; our blessed Lord walked thus meekly and humbly among the Pharisees." At another time, seeing a lamb devoured by a hog, "Ah! little lamb," said he, weeping, "in how lively a manner dost thou represent the death of my Saviour!"

The illustrious St. Francis Borgia, while yet duke of Gandia, frequently recreated himself in hawking; during this amusement he was accustomed to make a thousand devout reflections. "I admired," said he, afterwards, "how the falcons come to hand, suffer themselves to be hooded and

to be tied to the perch; and that men are so rebellious to the voice of God."

The great St. Basil said, that the rose in the midst of thorns makes this remonstrance to men: "That which is most agreeable in this world, O ye mortals! is mingled with sorrow: nothing here is pure; regret always follows mirth; widowhood, marriage; care, fruitfulness; and ignominy, glory. Expense follows honor; loathing comes after delight; and sickness after health. The rose is a fair flower," said this holy man, "yet it makes me sorrowful, reminding me of my sin, for which the earth has been condemned to bring forth thorns."

A devout soul, standing over a brook on a very clear night, and seeing the heavens and stars therein represented exclaimed, "O my God! these very stars which I now behold shall be one day beneath my feet, when thou shalt have lodged me in thy celestial tabernacles; and as the stars of heaven are here represented, even so are the men of this earth represented in the living fountain of divine charity." Another, seeing a river flowing swiftly along, cried out, "My soul shall never be at rest, till she be swallowed up in the sea of the divinity, her original source." St. Francisca, contemplating a pleasant brook, upon the bank of which she was kneeling at her prayers, being rapt into an ecstasy, often repeated these words, "The grace of my God flows thus gently and sweetly, like this little stream." Another, looking on the trees in bloom, sighed and said, "Ah! why am I alone without blossom in the garden of the Church!" Another, seeing little chickens gath-

ered together under the hen said, "Preserve us, O Lord! continually under the shadow of thy wings." Another, looking upon the flower called Heliotropium, which turns to the sun, "When shall the time come," said he, "O my God! that my soul shall faithfully follow the attractions of Thy goodness?" And seeing the flowers called pansies, which are beautiful, but without fragrance, "Ah!" said he, "such are my conceptions, fair in appearance, but of no effect, producing nothing."

Behold, Philothea, how one may extract good thoughts and holy aspirations from everything that presents itself amidst the variety of this mortal life! Unhappy they who withdraw the creatures from their Creator, to make them the instrument of sin; and thrice happy they that turn the creatures to the glory of their Creator, and employ them to the honor of his sovereign Majesty. As St. Gregory Nazianzen says, "I am wont to refer all things to my spiritual profit." Read the devout epitaph of St. Paula, composed by St. Jerome. How agreeable to behold it interspersed with those aspirations and holy thoughts, which she was accustomed to draw from occurrences of every nature!

Now, as the great work of devotion consists in the exercise of spiritual recollection and ejaculatory prayers, the want of all other prayers may be supplied by them; but the loss of these can scarcely be repaired by any other means. Without them we cannot lead a good, active life, much less a contemplative one. Without them repose

would be but idleness and labor vexation. Wherefore, I conjure you to embrace this, exercise your whole heart, without ever desisting from its practice.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF MASS, AND HOW WE OUGHT TO HEAR IT.

HITHERTO I have said nothing of the most holy, sacred, and august sacrament and sacrifice of the Mass; the centre of the Christian religion, the heart of devotion, and the soul of piety; a mystery so ineffable as to comprise within itself the abyss of divine charity; a mystery in which God communicates himself really to us, and in a special manner replenishes our souls with spiritual graces and favors.

2. When prayer, O Philothea! is united to this divine sacrifice, it becomes so unspeakably efficacious as to cause the soul to overflow, as it were, with heavenly consolations. Here she reclines upon her well-beloved, who fills her with so much spiritual sweetness, that she resembles, as it is said in the canticles, a pillar of smoke, proceeding from a fire of aromatic wood, from myrrh and frankincense, and from all the powders of the perfumer.

3. Endeavor, therefore, to assist at Mass every day, that you may jointly, with the priest, offer up the holy sacrifice of your Redeemer, to God

his Father, for yourself and the whole Church. "The angels," says St. John Chrysostom, "always attend in great numbers to honor this adorable mystery"; and we, by associating ourselves to them, with one and the same intention, cannot but receive many favorable influences from so holy a society. The choirs of the Church triumphant and those of the Church militant unite themselves to our Lord in this divine action, that with him, in him, and through him, they may ravish the heart of God the Father, and make his mercy all our own. Oh, what a happiness it is to a soul devoutly to contribute her affections for obtaining so precious and desirable a treasure!

4. Should some indispensable business prevent you from assisting in person at the celebration of this sovereign sacrifice, endeavor at least to assist at it by a spiritual presence, uniting your intention with that of all the faithful; and using the same interior acts of devotion in your closet that you would use in some church represented to your imagination.

5. Now, to hear Mass in a proper manner, either really or mentally, 1. From the beginning, till the priest goes up to the altar, make with him your preparation, which consists in placing yourself in the presence of God, acknowledging your unworthiness and begging pardon for your sins. 2. From the time he goes up to the altar till the Gospel, consider the birth and the life of our Lord, by a simple and general consideration. 3. From the Gospel till after the Creed, consider the preaching of our Saviour,

and protest that you resolve to live and die in the faith and obedience of his holy word, and in the communion of the holy Catholic Church. From the Creed to the *Pater Noster* apply your heart to the mysteries of the passion and death of our Redeemer, essentially represented in this holy sacrifice, and which, with the priest and the rest of the people, you must offer to the honor of God the Father, an . for your salvation. 5. From the *Pater Noster* to the Communion, strive to excite a thousanc desires in your heart, ardently wishing to be forever united to our Saviour by everlasting love.

6. From the Communion till the end, return thanks to Jesus Christ for his incarnation, life, passion, and death : as well as for the love he testifies to us in this holy sacrifice ; conjuring him to be forever merciful to you ; to your parents and friends, and to the whole Church ; and finally, humbling yourself with your whole heart, receive devoutly the benediction which our Lord gives you through the ministry of his officer, the officiating priest.

But should you prefer, during Mass, to meditate on the mystery you proposed for your consideration on that day, it is not necessary that you should divert your thoughts to make all these particular acts ; but, at the beginning, direct your intention to adore, and offer up this holy sacrifice, by the exercise of your meditations and prayer ; for in all meditations the aforesaid acts may be found either expressly or tacitly and equivalently.

CHAPTER XV.

OF VESPERS, AND OTHER PUBLIC EXERCISES

BESIDES hearing Mass on Sundays and holidays, you ought also, Philothea, to be present at Vespers and the other public offices of the Church as far as your convenience will permit. For, as these days are dedicated to God, we ought to perform more acts to his honor and glory on them than on other days. By this means you will experience the sweetness of devotion, as St. Austin did, who testifies in his confessions, that hearing the divine office in the beginning of his conversion, his heart melted into tenderness, and his eyes into tears of piety. And, indeed, to speak once for all, there is always more benefit and comfort to be derived from the public offices of the Church than from private devotions, God having ordained that communion of prayers should always have the preference.

Enter, then, willingly into the confraternities of the place in which you reside, and especially those whose exercises are most productive of fruit and edification, as in so doing you practise a sort of obedience acceptable to God; for, although these confraternities are not commanded, they are nevertheless recommended by the Church, which, to testify her approbation of them, grants indulgences and other privileges to such as enter them. Besides, it is always very laudable to concur and co-

operate with many in their good designs; for, although we might perform as good exercises alone as in the company of a confraternity, and perhaps take more pleasure in performing them in private, yet God is more glorified by the union and contribution we make of our good works with those of our brethren and neighbors.

I say the same of all kinds of public prayers and devotions, which we should countenance as much as possible with our good example, for the edification of our neighbor, and our affection for the glory of God and the common intention.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE HONOR AND INVOCATION OF SAINTS.

SINCE God often sends us inspirations by his angels, we also ought frequently to send back our inspirations to him by the same messengers. The holy souls of the deceased, who dwell in heaven with the angels, and, as our Saviour says, are equal and like to the angels, Luke xv. 36, do also the same office of inspiring us, and interceding for us by their holy prayers. O my Philothea! let us then join our hearts with these heavenly spirits, and happy souls; and as the young nightingales learn to sing in company of the old, so, by the holy association we make with the saints, we shall learn to pray and to sing the divine praises in a much

better manner. "I will sing praises to thee, O Lord," says David, "in the sight of the angels." Psalms cxxxvii. 2.

Honor, reverence, love, and respect in a special manner, the sacred and glorious Virgin Mary, she being the mother of our sovereign Lord, and consequently our mother. Let us run, then, to her, and, as her little children, cast ourselves into her bosom with a perfect confidence, at all times, and in all occurrences. Let us call upon this dear Mother; let us invoke her motherly love; and, endeavoring to imitate her virtues, let us bear a true filial affection towards her.

Make yourself familiar with the angels, and behold them frequently in spirit; for, without being seen, they are at present with you. Always bear a particular love and reverence towards the angel of the diocese wherein you dwell, and of the persons with whom you live; but especially towards your own angel guardian. Address yourself often to them, honor and praise them, and make use of their assistance and succor in all your affairs, spiritual or temporal, that they may coöperate with your intentions.

The great Peter Faber, the first priest, the first preacher, and the first proposer of divinity in the Holy Society of Jesus, and the companion of St. Ignatius, its founder, returning from Germany, where he had done great service to the glory of our Lord, and travelling through this diocese, the place of his birth, related, that having passed through many heretical places, he had received innumerable consolations from the guardian angels

of the several parishes, and that on repeated occasions he had received the most sensible and convincing proofs of their protection. Sometimes they preserved him from the ambush of his enemies, at other times they rendered several souls more mild, and tractable to receive from him the doctrine of salvation: this he related with so much earnestness, that a gentlewoman then very young, who heard it from his own mouth, related it but four years ago, that is to say, about threescore years after he had told it, with an extraordinary feeling. I had the consolation last year to consecrate an altar on the spot where God was pleased this blessed man should be born, in a little village called Vilaret, amidst our most craggy mountains.

Choose some particular saint or saints, whose lives may please you most, and whom you can best imitate, and in whose intercession you may have a particular confidence. The saint, whose name you bear, is already assigned you, from your baptism.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW WE OUGHT TO HEAR AND READ THE WORD OF GOD.

LISTEN with devotion to the word of God, whether you hear it in familiar conversation, with your spiritual friends, or in a sermon. Make all the profit of it you possibly can, and suffer it not to fall to the ground, but receive it into your

heart as a precious balm; imitating the most holy Virgin, who carefully preserved in her heart all the words which were spoken in praise of her Son. Remember that our Lord gathers up the words we speak to him in our prayers, according as we gather up those he speaketh to us by preaching.

Always have at hand some approved book of devotion; such as the spiritual works of St. Bonaventure, of Gerson, of Denis, the Carthusian, of Louis Blosius, of Granada, of Stella, of Arias, of Pihelle, of Dupont, of Avilla, the Spiritual Combat, St. Austin's Confessions, St. Jerome's Epistles, etc., etc., and read a little in them with as much devotion, every day, as if you were reading a letter, which those saints had sent you from heaven to show you the way, and encourage you to come thither. Read, also, the histories and lives of the saints, in which, as in a looking-glass, you may behold the portraiture of a Christian life, and accommodate their actions to your state of life; for, although several actions of the saints cannot absolutely be imitated by such as live in the midst of the world, yet they may, in some degree, be followed. For example, we may imitate the solitude of St. Paul, the first hermit, in our spiritual and real retirements, of which we shall hereafter speak, and have already spoken; the extreme poverty of St. Francis, by the practices of poverty, and so of the rest. It is true, there are some of their histories that give more light for the conduct of our lives than others, such as the life of the blessed mother Teresa, the lives of the first Jesuits, that of St. Charles Borromeus, archbishop

of Milan; of St. Lewis; of St. Bernard; the Chronicles of St. Francis; and several others.

There are others again, which contain more matter of admiration than of imitation; as the life of St. Mary of Egypt, of St. Simeon Stylites, of the two St. Catharines of Sienna and of Genoa, of St. Angela, and the like; which, nevertheless, fail not, in general, to give us a great relish for the love of God.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW WE OUGHT TO RECEIVE INSPIRATIONS,

BY inspirations are meant all those interior attractions, motions, reproaches and remorses, lights and conceptions, which God excites in us, preventing our hearts with his blessings, through his fatherly care and love, in order to awaken, stimulate, urge, and attract us to the practice of every virtue; to heavenly love; to good resolutions; and, in a word, to everything that may help us on our way to eternal happiness. This is what the Spouse calls knocking at the door, and speaking to the heart of his spouse; awaking her when she sleeps; calling after her when she is absent; inviting her to gather apples and flowers in his garden; to sing and to cause her sweet voice to sound in his ears.

That you may the more perfectly comprehend me, I must use a comparison. Marriage should be

preceded by three circumstances with relation to the lady who is to be married: *first*, the person is proposed to her; *secondly*, she entertains the proposition; *thirdly*, she gives her consent. In like manner, when God intends doing us some act of great charity, or through our means to some other person; at *first*, he proposes it by inspiration; *secondly*, we are pleased with it; and *thirdly*, we give our full consent to it. For, as there are three steps by which we descend to the commission of sin, viz., temptation, delectation, and consent; so there are also three steps by which we ascend to the practice of virtue: inspiration, which is opposite to temptation; the delectation conceived in the inspiration, which is opposite to the delectation in the temptation; and the consent to the inspiration, which is opposite to the consent given to the temptation.

Now, though the inspiration should continue during our whole life, yet we could not render ourselves pleasing to God if we took no pleasure in it; on the contrary, he would be offended with us, as he was with the Israelites, whose conversion he had been soliciting very nearly forty years. (Ps. xlv.) During this time they would give no ear to him, and he swore in his wrath that they should never enter into his rest. In like manner, the gentleman that had for a long time served a young lady would be very much disobliged, if, after all his attentions, she would not hearken to the marriage he desired.

By the pleasure we take in inspirations we not only show a disposition to glorify God, but begin

already to please his divine Majesty. For although this delight is not an entire consent, yet it is a certain disposition towards it, and if it be a good sign to take pleasure in hearing the word of God, which is an exterior inspiration, it must also, no doubt, be a good thing and pleasing to God, to take delight in his internal aspirations. Of this kind of pleasure the sacred spouse speaks, Cant. v. 6: "My soul melted when my beloved spoke." Thus the gentleman is already well pleased with the lady whom he serves, and esteems himself favored when he sees her take delight in his service.

But, after all, it is the consent which perfects the virtuous act. For, if after receiving and taking pleasure in the inspiration, we nevertheless refuse our consent, we show ourselves extremely ungrateful, and highly offend his divine Majesty, by our contempt of his favors. Thus it happened to the spouse, for though the sweet voice of her beloved had touched her heart with a holy pleasure, yet she would not open to him the door, but excused herself by a frivolous excuse, with which her spouse, being justly displeased, went his way and left her. Thus, if the gentleman, who after having for a long time paid his addresses to a lady, and made his service agreeable to her, is at last shaken off and spurned, would he not have much more reason for discontent than if his suit had never been favored with any encouragement?

Resolve, then, Philothea, to accept with cordiality all the inspirations it shall please God to

send you; and when they come receive them as ambassadors sent by the King of heaven, who desires to enter into a contract of marriage with you. Attend calmly to his propositions, think of the love with which you are inspired, cherish the holy inspiration, and consent to the holy motion, with an entire, a loving and a permanent consent; for, by this means, God, whom you cannot oblige, will hold himself greatly obliged to your good will. But before you consent to inspirations in things that are of great importance, or that are out of the ordinary way, always consult your spiritual guide, that he may examine whether the inspiration be true or false, lest you should be deceived; because the enemy, seeing a soul ready to consent to inspirations, often proposes false ones to deceive her, which he can never do, so long as she with humility obeys her conductor.

The consent being given, you must diligently procure the effects, and hasten to put the inspiration into execution, which is the height of true virtue; for to have the consent within the heart without producing its effects would be like planting a vine and not intending it should bring forth fruit.

Now, what contributes wonderfully to all this is the practice of the morning exercise, and of those spiritual retirements above recommended, as by these means we prepare ourselves to do what is good, not only by a general, but also by a particular, preparation.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF HOLY CONFESSION.

OUR Saviour has left the holy sacrament of penance and confession to his Church, that in it we might cleanse ourselves from all our iniquities, as often as we should be defiled by them. Never suffer your heart then, O Philothea! to remain long infected with sin, since you have so easy a remedy at hand. As the lioness, having been with the leopard, runs in haste to wash herself, and get rid of the stench which the meeting has left, lest the lion should be offended and provoked; so the soul, which has consented to sin, ought to conceive a horror of herself, and cleanse herself as quickly as possible, out of the respect she ought to bear to the divine Majesty, who incessantly beholds her. Alas, why should we die a spiritual death, since we have so sovereign a remedy at hand!

Confess yourself humbly and devoutly once every week, and always, if possible, before you communicate, although your conscience should not reproach you with the guilt of mortal sin, for by confession you not only receive absolution from the venial sins you confess, but likewise strength to avoid them, light to discern them well, and grace to repair all the damage you may have sustained by them. You will also practise the virtues of humility, obedience, sincerity,

charity; nay, in a word, in this one act of confession you shall exercise more virtues than in any other whatsoever.

How small soever may be the sins which you confess, you must always conceive a sincere sorrow for them, and make a firm resolution never to commit them for the time to come. Many who confess their venial sins merely out of custom, and for the sake of order, without any thought of amendment, continue, by this means, their whole lifetime, under the guilt of these sins, and thus lose several spiritual advantages. If, then, you confess that you have spoken some word that was not proper, or that you have played excessively, repent, and form a determined resolution to amend; for it is an abuse to confess any kind of sin, whether mortal or venial, without a will to be delivered from it, since confession was instituted for no other end.

Make no superfluous accusations, such as these: I have not loved God as much as I ought; I have not prayed with as much devotion as I ought; I have not cherished my neighbor as I ought; I have not received the sacraments with as great reverence as I ought, etc., etc.; for in saying this you will say nothing that can make your confessor understand the state of your conscience, since all the saints in heaven and on earth might say the same thing if they were to come to confession. Examine, then, what particular reason you may have to make these accusations; and when you have discovered it accuse yourself sincerely and distinctly. For example, you ac-

cuse yourself, that you have not loved your neighbor as much as you ought; perhaps, because having seen some poor person in distress, whom you might easily have assisted, you took no notice of him. In this case, you should have said, "Having seen a poor man in necessity, I did not assist him as I might have done," through negligence, hard-heartedness, contempt, or according to whatever you may discover to have been the occasion of this fault. You must not accuse yourself either of not having prayed to God with as much devotion as you ought; but if you have admitted any voluntary distraction, or neglected to choose a proper place, or time, or posture, requisite for engaging your attention in prayer, accuse yourself of it with simplicity, without those general allegations which signify nothing in confession.

Content not yourself with confessing your venial sins, merely as to the fact, but accuse yourself also of the motive which induced you to commit them. For example, be not content to say you have told a lie, without prejudice to any person; but also declare whether it was vainglory, to praise or to excuse yourself, or whether in jest or through obstinacy. If you have sinned in play, express whether it was from the desire of gain or from the pleasure of conversation, and so of the rest. Tell, also, how long a time you have continued in your sin; for the length of time is an aggravation of the evil, there being a great difference betwixt a vain thought that has slipped into the soul for a quarter of an hour, and one which

she has entertained for the space of two or three days. We must, then, tell the fact, the motive, and the continuance of our sins. For though we are not bound to declare venial sins, nor absolutely obliged to confess them, yet those who desire to cleanse their souls perfectly, and attain to holy devotion, must be careful to make their spiritual physician acquainted with the evil of which they desired to be cured, no matter how small it may be.

Fail not, then, to tell what is requisite, that he may perfectly comprehend the nature of your offence. For example, a man with whom I am displeased speaks a light word to me in jest, and I put myself into a passion, whereas, if another, more agreeable to me, had said something more harsh, I should have taken it in good part; in this case I would not fail to say, I have spoken angry words against a certain person, and been affronted at some things he said to me, not so much on account of the words, as of my dislike to him. Moreover, if, to make the matter more clear, it was necessary to express what the words were, I think it advisable to declare them, as by doing so, you not only discover the sin, but also your evil inclinations, customs, habits, and other roots of the sin, by means of which your confessor acquires a more perfect knowledge of the heart he treats with, and of the most proper remedies to be applied. But you must always conceal the person who has had any part in your sin, as much as lies in your power.

Be upon your guard against a number of sins which are apt to conceal themselves and reign

insensibly in the soul. In order that you may confess them and be able to free yourself of them, read attentively the 6th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 35th, and 36th chapters of the third part, and the 7th chapter of the fourth part.

Change not easily your confessor, but, having made choice of one, continue, from time to time, to give him an account of the state of your conscience, with candor and sincerity, at least once every month or every two months. Let him also know the state of your inclinations, though you may not have sinned by them; for instance, if you should be tormented with sadness or with melancholy, or if you should be inclined to mirth, or to the desires of acquiring worldly goods and such like inclinations.

CHAPTER XX.

OF FREQUENT COMMUNION.

IT is said that Mithridates, king of Pontus, having invented the mithridate, so strengthened his body by the frequent use of it, that afterwards, endeavoring to poison himself to avoid falling under the servitude of the Romans, he could not effect his object. To the end that we should live forever, our Saviour has instituted the most venerable sacrament of the Eucharist, which contains really his flesh and his blood. Whoever, therefore, frequently eateth of this food, with devotion,

so effectually confirmeth the health of his soul that it is almost impossible he should be poisoned by any kind of evil affection; for we cannot be nourished with this flesh of life, and at the same time live with the affections of death. Thus, as men dwelling in the terrestrial paradise might have avoided corporal death by feeding on the fruit of the tree of life which God had planted therein, so they may also avoid spiritual death by feeding on this sacrament of life. If the most tender fruits, and such as are most subject to corruption, as cherries, strawberries, and apricots, can be easily preserved the whole year with sugar or honey, why should not our hearts, however frail and weak, be preserved from the corruption of sin, when seasoned and sweetened with the incorruptible flesh and blood of the Son of God? O Philothea! what reply shall reprobate Christians be able to make, when the just Judge shall upbraid them with their folly, or rather madness, in having involved themselves in eternal death, since it was so easy to have maintained themselves in spiritual life and health, by feeding on his body, which he has left them with that intention? Miserable wretches! will he say, why did you die, having the fruit and the food of life at your command?

"To receive the holy communion every day," says St. Augustine, "I neither recommend nor discourage; but to communicate every Sunday, I persuade and exhort every one, provided his soul be without any affection to sin." With the same holy doctor of the Church, I neither ab

solutely condemn nor approve of the practice of communicating daily, but leave it to the discretion of the ghostly father of him that would be directed in this point. As the dispositions required for daily communion ought to be the most exquisite, it is not prudent to recommend it generally to all; and as these dispositions may be found perfect in many holy souls, it is not advisable to dissuade generally from it, but it is better to leave it to be regulated by the consideration of the inward state of each individual. Wherefore, as it would be imprudent to advise every one, without distinction, to frequent communion, so it would be imprudent also to blame any one for it, especially if he followed the advice of a prudent director. When daily communion was objected against St. Catharine of Sienna, she returned this modest and graceful answer: "Since St. Austin blamed it not, I pray do not you blame it, and I shall be content."

But as St. Austin, Philothea, strenuously exhorts us to communicate every Sunday, comply with his advice as far as you may be able. For, since I suppose you have no affection to either mortal or venial sin, you are in that disposition which St. Austin requires; yea, and in a more excellent degree, since you have not only an aversion to commit sin, but you do not even retain in you an affection to sin; so that, should your confessor think it proper, you may profitably communicate still more frequently than every Sunday.

However, many lawful impediments may occur, not perhaps on your own part, but on the part of

those with whom you live, which may occasion a discreet guide to advise you not to communicate so often. For example: if you live in a state of subjection to persons who are so ill instructed, or so capricious as to be troubled or disquieted to see you communicate so frequently, it would, in such a case, be advisable to condescend to their humor and receive holy communion but once a fortnight; but this is to be understood, when you can by no other means remove the difficulty. As there can be no general rule prescribed in this case, we must act according to the advice of our spiritual director; though I may say, with assurance, that the distance between the times of communicating, for such as desire to serve God devoutly should not exceed a month.

If you act with prudence, neither father, mother, husband, nor wife, will prevent you from communicating often; for if, on the day of your communion, you are not less diligent in the discharge of your duties, but acquit yourself of them with more cheerfulness and alacrity, however irksome they may be, there is no likelihood that any person will seek to prevent you from an exercise in which no kind of inconvenience is found. But if the spirit of those with whom you live is so perverse and unreasonable as to give you trouble on this account, as I have said already, your director will advise you to use some condescension.

I must say a word to married people. In the old law, God disapproved that creditors should exact their debts on festival days, but he never

disapproved that debtors should pay what they owed to such as exacted it. It is an indecency, though not a great sin, to solicit the payment of the marriage debt on the day of communion; but it is not indecent, but rather meritorious, to pay it. Wherefore no one ought to be debarred from the communion for paying this debt, if otherwise their devotion incite them to desire it. The primitive Christians communicated every day, although married, and blessed with a generation of children; whence I infer frequent communion is by no means inconsistent with the state of a parent, husband or wife, provided the party that communicates be prudent and discreet. As for bodily diseases, there are none which can be a lawful impediment to this holy devotion, excepting that which provokes to frequent vomiting.

To communicate every eight days, it is requisite that one should be free from mortal sin, and any affection to venial sin, and have, moreover, a great desire of communicating; but to communicate every day, it is necessary we should overcome the greatest part of our evil inclinations, and that it should be by the advice of our spiritual director.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW WE OUGHT TO COMMUNICATE.

PREPARE yourself for holy communion the evening before by many ejaculations of love, retiring earlier, that you may rise sooner in the morning. Should you awake in the night, raise your heart to God immediately, and make some ardent aspirations, in order to prepare your soul for the reception of her Spouse, who, being awake whilst you were asleep, prepares a thousand graces and favors for you, if, on your part, you are disposed to receive them. In the morning rise up with alacrity to enjoy the happiness you hope for; and, having confessed, go with a great, but humble confidence, to receive this heavenly food, which nourishes your soul to immortality; and after repeating thrice, "Lord, I am not worthy," etc., cease to move your head or your lips to pray, or to sigh, but opening your mouth gently and moderately, and lifting up your head as much as is necessary, that the priest may see what he is about, full of faith, hope, and charity, receive him, in whom, by whom, and for whom, you believe, hope, and whom you love. O Philothea! represent to yourself, that as the bee, after gathering from the flowers the dew of heaven, and the choicest juice of the earth, reducing them into honey, carries it into her hive, so the priest, having taken from the altar the Saviour of the

world, the true Son of God, who, as the dew, is descended from heaven, and the true Son of the Virgin, who, as a flower is sprung from the earth of our humanity, puts him as delicious food into your mouth and body.

Having received him in your breast, excite your heart to do homage to the author of your salvation; treat with him concerning your internal affairs; consider that he has taken up his abode within you for your happiness; make him, then, as welcome as you possibly can, and conduct yourself in such a manner as to make it appear by all your actions that God is with you.

But when you cannot enjoy the benefit of really communicating at the holy mass, communicate, at least, spiritually, uniting yourself by an ardent desire to this life-giving flesh of our Saviour.

Your principal intention in communicating should be to advance in virtue, to strengthen yourself in the love of God, and to receive comfort from this love; for you must receive through love that which love alone caused to be given to you. You cannot consider our Saviour in an action, either more full of love or more tender than this, in which he annihilates himself, or, as we may more properly say, changes himself into food, that so he may penetrate our souls and unite himself most intimately to the heart and to the body of his faithful.

If worldlings ask you why you communicate so often, tell them it is to learn to love God, to purify yourself from your imperfections, to be delivered from your miseries, to be comforted in your afflictions, and supported in your weaknesses. Tell

them that *two sorts of persons* ought to communicate frequently: the *perfect*, because, being well disposed, they would be greatly to blame not to approach to the source and fountain of perfection, and *the imperfect*, to the end that they may be able to aspire to perfection; the *strong*, lest they should become weak; and the *weak*, that they may become strong; the *sick*, that they may be restored to health; and the *healthy*, lest they should fall into sickness; that for your part, being imperfect, weak, and sick, you have need to communicate frequently with Him who is your perfection, your strength, and your physician. Tell them that those who have not many worldly affairs to look after ought to communicate often, because they have leisure; that those who have much business on hand should also communicate often, for he who labors much and is loaded with pains ought to eat solid food, and that frequently. Tell them that you receive the holy sacrament to learn to receive it well; because one hardly performs an action well which he does not often practise.

Communicate frequently, then, Philothea, and as frequently as you can, with the advice of your ghostly father; and, believe me, as hares in our mountains become white in winter, because they neither see nor eat anything but snow, so, by approaching to, and eating beauty, purity, and goodness itself, in this divine sacrament, you will become altogether fair, pure, and virtuous.

Part Third.

CONTAINS SEVERAL INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUES

CHAPTER I.

OF THE CHOICE WE OUGHT TO MAKE AS TO THE EXERCISE OF VIRTUES.

AS the queen of the bees never goes abroad into the fields without being surrounded by all her little subjects, so charity, the queen of virtues, never enters the heart without bringing all the other virtues in her train, exercising and disciplining them as a captain does his soldiers. But she neither employs them all at the same time, nor in the same manner, nor in all seasons, nor in every place; for as the just man, like a tree planted by the river side, brings forth fruit in due season, so charity, watering the soul, produces a variety of good works, each one in its proper time. "Music, how agreeable soever in itself, is out of season in time of mourning," says the proverb. It is a great fault in many, who, undertaking the practice of some particular virtue, wish to exercise it on all occasions. Like some ancient philosophers, they either always weep or laugh; and, what is yet worse, they censure those who do not always, like themselves, exercise the same virtues; whereas,

we should "rejoice with the joyful, and weep with them that weep," says the Apostle; "for charity is patient, kind, bountiful, discreet, and condescending."

There are, however, some virtues of so general utility as not only to require an exercise of themselves apart, but also communicate their qualities to the practice of other virtues. Occasions are seldom presented for the exercise of fortitude, magnanimity, and magnificence; but meekness, temperance, modesty, and humility, are virtues wherewith all the actions of our life should be tempered. It is true, there are other virtues more agreeable, but the use of these is more necessary. Sugar is more agreeable than salt; but the use of salt is more necessary and general. Therefore we must constantly have a good store of these general virtues in readiness, since we stand in need of them almost continually.

In the exercise of the virtues we should always prefer that which is most conformable to our duty, not that which is most agreeable to our imagination. St. Paula was prejudiced in favor of corporal austerities and mortifications, that she might more easily enjoy spiritual comfort; but she was under a greater obligation to obey her superiors, and therefore St. Jerome blamed her for using immoderate abstinences against her bishop's advice. The apostles, on the other hand, being commissioned to preach the gospel and distribute the bread of heaven, thought that they should act wrongly by interrupting these evangelical exercises for the relief of the poor, which, though, is

in itself an excellent virtue. Every condition of life has its own peculiar virtue. The virtues of a prelate are different from those of a prince; those of a soldier from those of a married woman, or a widow, and so on through every class of society. Though all ought to possess all the virtues, yet all are not equally bound to exercise them; but each ought to practise, in a more particular manner, those virtues which are most requisite for the state of life to which he is called.

Among the virtues unconnected with our particular duty we must prefer the excellent to the glittering and showy. Comets appear greater than stars, and apparently occupy a greater space; whereas, in reality, they can neither in magnitude nor equality be compared to the stars; for as they only seem great because they are nearer, and appear in a grosser manner than the stars, so there are certain virtues, which, on account of their proximity, become more sensible, or, to use the expression, more material, that are highly esteemed and always preferred by the vulgar. Hence it is that so many prefer corporal alms before spiritual; the hair-shirt, fasting, going barefoot, using the discipline, and other such corporal mortifications, before meekness, mildness, modesty, and other mortifications of the heart; which are, nevertheless, more exalted. Choose then, Philothea, the best virtues, not the most esteemed; the most noble, not the most apparent; those that are actually the best, not those that are the most ostensible or shining.

It is profitable for every one to exercise some

particular virtue, yet not so as to abandon the rest, but to keep his spirit in a more settled order. A fair virgin, in royal attire, more bright than the sun, whose head was decorated with a crown of olives, appeared to St. John, bishop of Alexandria, and said to him: "I am the eldest daughter of the king: if thou canst have me for thy friend, I shall conduct thee to his presence." He understood that she was mercy towards the poor, which God recommended to him; and therefore ever after he gave himself up so absolutely to the practice of this virtue as to obtain the title of St. John the Almoner. Eulogius, the Alexandrian, desiring to render God some particular service, and not having strength enough to embrace a solitary life, nor to subject himself to the obedience of another, took a poor wretch, quite eaten up with the leprosy, into his house, that he might exercise towards him the virtues of charity and mortification; and, to perform them the more worthily, he made a vow to honor and serve him as his lord and master: being tempted to separate, they addressed themselves to the great St. Anthony, who said, "Take care, my children, not to separate from each other, for being both of you near your end, if the angel should not find you together, you run a great risk of losing your crown."

St. Lewis visited hospitals, and attended the sick as diligently as if he had served for wages. St. Francis had so extraordinary a love for poverty as to call her his lady, and St. Dominick, for preaching, from which his order takes its name. St. Gregory the Great, following the example of

Abraham, took pleasure in entertaining pilgrims, and like him received the King of Glory in the form of a pilgrim. Tobias exercised his charity in burying the dead. St. Elizabeth, though a great princess, delighted in nothing so much as in abasing herself. St. Catharine of Genoa, in her widowhood, dedicated herself to serve a hospital. Cassian relates that a devout lady, desirous to exercise the virtue of patience, came to St. Athanasius, who, at her request, placed with her a poor widow, so exceedingly peevish, choleric, and troublesome, that by her insupportable temper she gave the good lady ample occasion to exercise the virtues of meekness and charity.

Thus, among the servants of God, some apply themselves to serve the sick; others to relieve the poor; others to propagate the knowledge of the Christian doctrine amongst children; others to reclaim souls that are gone astray; others to adorn churches and decorate altars; others to restore peace and concord amongst those who have been at variance. As embroiderers lay gold, silver, and silk on their several grounds, with such an admirable variety of colors as to resemble all kinds of flowers, so these pious souls make choice of some particular devotion to serve as a ground for the spiritual embroidery of all other virtues, holding thereby all their actions and affections better united and ordered, by referring them to their principal exercise; and thus they show forth their spirit in its gilded clothing, surrounded with variety. Ps. xliv. 10.

When assaulted by any vice we must embrace

the practice of the contrary virtue, and refer all the others to it; by which means we shall overcome our enemy, and at the same time advance in all virtues. Thus, if assaulted by pride or by anger, we must, in all our actions, practise humility and meekness; and make all our other exercises of prayer, and the sacraments of prudence, constancy, and sobriety, subservient to this end. For as the wild boar, to sharpen his tusks, wets and polishes them with his other teeth, and by this means sharpens all of them; so a virtuous man, having undertaken to perfect himself in that virtue of which he stands in most need for his defence, files and polishes it by the exercise of the other virtues, whilst they help to refine that one, make all of them become better polished. Thus it happened to Job, who, exercising himself particularly in patience, against the many temptations wherewith he was assaulted, became perfectly established and confirmed in all kinds of virtues. Nay, St. Gregory Nazianzen says, "that by the perfect exercise of one only virtue a person may attain to the height of all the rest;" for which he alleges the example of Rahab, who, having exactly practised the virtue of hospitality, arrived at a great degree of Glory. But this is to be understood of a virtue which is practised with great fervor and charity

CHAPTER II.

A CONTINUATION OF THE FORMER DISCOURSE ABOUT THE CHOICE OF VIRTUES.

YOUNG beginners in devotion, says St. Austin, commit certain faults, which, according to the rigor of the laws of perfection, are blamable and yet commendable, on account of the presage they give of future excellence in piety, to which they serve as a disposition. That low and servile fear which begets excessive scruples in the souls of new converts from a course of sin, is commendable in beginners, and a certain foreboding of a future purity of conscience; but the same fear would be blamable in those who are far advanced, in whose heart love ought to reign, which by imperceptible degrees chases away this kind of servile fear.

St. Bernard, at the beginning, was full of rigor towards those that put themselves under his direction; he told them that they must leave the body behind, and come to him only with the spirit. When he heard their confessions he severely reprehended the most trivial faults, and urged them on to perfection, with such vehemence that, instead of making them advance forward, he drew them back; for they fell into despondency at seeing themselves so earnestly pressed up so steep and high an ascent. Observe, Philothea, it was an ardent zeal for perfect purity that induced this great saint to adopt this manner of proceeding.

This zeal of the saint was a great virtue, but a virtue nevertheless reprehensible; of which God himself, in a holy vision, made him sensible, infusing at the same time into his soul so meek, amiable, and tender a spirit, that, being totally changed, he repented of his former rigor and severity, and became so gracious and condescending to every one as to make himself all to all, that he might gain all. St. Jerome having related how his dear daughter, St. Paula, was not only excessive, but obstinate, in the exercise of bodily mortification, to such a degree that she would not yield to the contrary advice of Epiphanius, her bishop, and, moreover, that she suffered herself to be carried away with so excessive grief for the death of her friends as to be herself frequently in danger of death, concludes at length with these words: "Some will say, that, instead of writing the praises of this holy woman, I write reprehensions and dispraises: but I call Jesus to witness, whom she served, and whom I desire to serve, that I lie not either on the one side, or on the other, but set down sincerely what related to her, as one Christian should do of another; that is to say, I write her history, not her panegyric; and that her vices are the virtues of others;" meaning that the failings and defects of St. Paula would have been esteemed virtue in a soul less perfect, and that there are actions esteemed imperfections in the perfect, which would be held great perfections in those who are imperfect.

It is a good sign, when "at the end of sickness" the legs of the sick person swell, for it shows that

nature, now acquiring strength, expels her superfluous humors; but this would be a bad symptom in a healthy person; as it would show that nature has not sufficient strength to resolve and dissipate the humors. We must, my Philothea, have a good opinion of those who practise virtue, though imperfectly, since we see the saints themselves have often practised them in this manner. But, as to ourselves, we must be careful to exercise them, not only faithfully, but discreetly; and to this end we must strictly observe the advice of the wise man, "not to rely on our own prudence," but on the judgment of those whom God has given us for conductors.

There are certain things which many esteem as virtues, which in reality are not; I mean ecstasies, or raptures, insensibilities, impassibilities, deifical unions, elevations, transformations, and similar perfections, treated of in certain books, which promise to elevate the soul to a contemplation purely intellectual, to an essential application of the spirit, and a supernatural life. But observe well, Philothea, these perfections are not virtues, but rather the recompenses of virtues, or small specimens of the happiness of the life to come, which God sometimes presents to men, to make them enraptured with the whole piece, which is only to be found in heaven.

But we must not aspire to their favors, since they are by no means necessary to the serving and loving of God, which should be our only pretension; neither are they such as can be obtained by labor and industry, since they are rather passions

than actions, which we may indeed receive, but cannot produce in ourselves. I add that we have only undertaken, and must strenuously endeavor to render ourselves good, devout, and godly; but, if it should please God to elevate us to these angelical perfections, we, also, shall then be angels. In the meantime let us endeavor humbly and devoutly to acquire those simple virtues for which our Saviour has exhorted us to labor; such as patience, meekness, mortification of the heart, humility, obedience, poverty, chastity, tenderness towards our neighbors, bearing with their imperfections, diligence, and holy fervor. Let us leave these supereminent favors to elevated souls; we merit not so high a rank in the service of God; we shall be too happy to serve him in his kitchen or to be his domestics in much lower stations. If he should hereafter think proper to admit us into his cabinet, or privy council, it will be through the excess of his bountiful goodness. Yea, Philothea, the King of Glory does not recompense his servants according to the dignity of the offices they hold, but according to the measure of the love and humility with which they exercise them. Saul, seeking the asses of his father, found the kingdom of Israel. Rebecca, watering the camels of Abraham, became the spouse of his son. Ruth, gleaning after the reapers of Boaz, and laying down at his feet, was advanced to his side and made his wife. High and elevated pretensions to extraordinary favors are subject to illusion and deceit; and it sometimes happens that those who imagine themselves angels are not so much as

good men, and that there is more sublimity in their words and expressions than in their manner of thinking and acting. We must neither despise nor censure any one; but, blessing God for the supereminence of others, keep ourselves in our lower but safer way, less eminent, but better suited to our insufficiency and littleness; in which, if we conduct ourselves with humility and fidelity, God will infallibly elevate us to a situation that will be truly exalted.

CHAPTER III.

OF PATIENCE.

"PATIENCE is necessary for you; that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise," — Heb. x. 36. If our Saviour himself has declared, Luke xxi. 19, "In your patience you shall possess your souls," should it not be, Philothea, a great happiness for man to possess his soul? — and the more perfect our patience, the more absolutely do we possess them. Let us frequently call to mind, that as our Lord has saved us by patient sufferings, so we also ought to work out our salvation by sufferings and afflictions; enduring injuries and contradictions with all possible meekness.

Limit not your patience to this or that kind of injuries and afflictions, but extend it universally

to all those that it shall please God to send you. Some are unwilling to suffer any tribulations but those that are honorable; for example, to be wounded in battle, to be a prisoner of war, to be persecuted for religion, or impoverished by some lawsuit determined in their favor; now these people do not love the tribulation, but the honor wherewith it is accompanied; whereas he that is truly patient suffers, indifferently, tribulations, whether accompanied by ignominy or honor. To be despised, reprehended, or accused by wicked men is pleasant to a man of good heart; but to suffer blame and ill-treatment from the virtuous, or from our friends and relations, is the *test* of true patience. I admire the meekness with which the great St. Charles Borromeo suffered a long time the public reprehensions that a great preacher of a strictly reformed order uttered against him in the pulpit, more than all the assaults he received from others; for as the sting of a bee is far more painful than that of a fly, so the evils we suffer from good men are much more insupportable than those we suffer from others; and yet it often happens that two good men, having each of them the best intentions, through a diversity of opinion, foment great persecutions and contradictions against each other.

Be patient, not only with respect to the subject of the affliction which may befall you, but also with regard to its accessories or accidental circumstances. Many could be content to encounter evils, provided they might not be incommoded by them. I am not vexed, says one, at being poor,

if it had not disabled me to serve my friends, to give my children proper education; or to live as honorable as I could wish. It would give me no concern, says another, were it not that the world would think it happened through my own fault. Another would be content to suffer the scandal patiently, provided no one would believe the detractor. Others are willing to suffer some part of the evil, but not the whole; they do not complain on account of their sickness, but for the want of money to obtain a cure, or because they are so troublesome to those about them. Now, I say, Philothea, we must not only bear sickness with patience, but also be content to suffer sickness under any disorder, and in any place, amongst those persons, and with those inconveniences, which God pleases; and the same must be said of other tribulations. When any evil befalls you, apply the remedies that may be in your power, agreeably to the will of God; for to act otherwise would be to tempt divine Providence. Having done this, wait with resignation for the success it may please God to send; and, should the remedies overcome the evil, return him thanks with humility, but if, on the contrary, the evils overcome the remedies, bless him with patience.

Attend to the following advice of St. Gregory: whenever you are "justly accused" of a fault, humble yourself, and candidly confess that you deserve more than the accusation which is brought against you; but, if the charge *be false*, excuse yourself meekly, denying your guilt, for you owe this respect to truth, and to the edifi-

cation of your neighbor. But if, after your true and lawful excuse, they should continue to accuse you, trouble not yourself nor strive to have your excuse admitted; for, having discharged your duty to truth, you must also do the same to humility, by which means you neither offend against the care you ought to have of your reputation, nor the love you owe to peace, meekness of heart, and humility.

Complain as little as possible of the wrongs you suffer; for, commonly speaking, he that complains sins, because self-love magnifies the injuries we suffer, and makes us believe them greater than they really are. Make no complaint to choleric or consorious persons; but if complaints be necessary, either to remedy the offence or restore quiet to your mind, let them be made to the meek and charitable, who truly love God; otherwise, instead of easing your heart, they will provoke it to greater pain; for, instead of extracting the thorn, they will sink it the deeper.

Many, on being sick, afflicted, or injured by others, refrain from complaining or showing a sensibility of what they suffer, lest it should appear that they wanted Christian fortitude, and resignation to the will of God; but still they contrive divers artifices, that others should not only pity and compassionate their sufferings and afflictions, but also admire their patience and fortitude. Now this is not a true patience, but rather a refined ambition and subtle vanity. "They have glory," says the apostle, "but not

with God." The truly patient man neither complains himself nor desires to be pitied by others; he speaks of his sufferings with truth and sincerity, without murmuring, complaining, or aggravating the matter. He patiently receives condolence, unless he is pitied for an evil which he does not suffer, for then he modestly declares that he does not suffer on that account, and thus he continues peaceable betwixt truth and patience, acknowledging, but not complaining of the evil.

Amidst the contradictions which shall infallibly befall you in the exercise of devotion, remember the words of our Lord, John xvi. 21: "A woman when she is in labor, hath sorrow because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth her child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." For you have conceived Jesus Christ, the noblest child in the world, in your soul, and until he is quite brought forth, you cannot but suffer in your labor; but be of good courage, these sorrows once past, everlasting joy shall remain with you for having brought him forth. Now you shall have wholly brought him forth, when you have entirely formed him in your heart and in your works, by an imitation of his life.

In sickness offer up all your griefs and pains as a sacrifice to our Lord, and beseech him to unite them with the torments he suffered for you. Obey your physician, take your medicines, food, and other remedies, for the love of God, remembering the gall he took for your sake;

desire to be cured, that you may serve him, but refuse not to continue sick, that you may obey him; and dispose yourself for death, if it be his pleasure, that you may praise and enjoy him forever.

Remember, that as bees, whilst making their honey, live upon a bitter provision, so we can never perform acts of greater sweetness, nor better compose the honey of excellent virtues, than whilst we eat the bread of bitterness, and live in the midst of afflictions. And as the honey that is gathered from the flowers of thyme, a small bitter herb, is the best, so the virtue which is exercised in the bitterness of the meanest and most abject tribulations is preferable.

Consider frequently Christ Jesus crucified, naked, blasphemed, slandered, forsaken, and overwhelmed with all sorts of troubles, sorrows, and labors; and remember that all your sufferings, either in quality or quantity, are not comparable to his, and that you can never suffer anything for him equal to that which he has endured for you.

Consider the torments the martyrs have suffered, and those which many at present endure more grievous without any comparison than yours, and then say: Alas! are not my sufferings consolations, and my pains pleasures, in comparison of those, who, without any relief, assistance, or mitigation, live in a continual death, overcharged with afflictions infinitely greater than mine?

CHAPTER IV.

OF EXTERIOR HUMILITY.

"BORROW empty vessels, not a few," said Eliseus to the poor widow, 4 Kings iv. 3; "and pour oil into them." To receive the grace of God into our hearts they must be emptied of vainglory.

As the Castrel,[1] by crying and looking on the birds of prey, affrights them by a secret property peculiar to itself, which makes the doves love her above all other birds, and live in security with her; so humility repels Satan, and preserves the grace and gift of the Holy Ghost within us. All the Saints, but particularly the King of Saints and his Mother, have always honored and cherished this blessed virtue more than any amongst the moral virtues. We call that glory *vain* which we assume to ourselves, either for what is not in us, or for what is in us, and belongs to us, but deserves not that we should glory in it. The nobility of our ancestors, the favor of great men, and popular honor, are things, not in us, but either in our progenitors, or in the esteem of other men. Some become proud and insolent, either by riding a good horse, wearing a feather in their hat, or by being dressed in a fine suit of clothes; but who does not see the folly of this? for if there be any glory in such things, the glory belongs to the horse, the bird, and the tailor; and what a meanness of heart

[1] Or Kestrel, a bird of the hawk kind

must it be, to borrow esteem from a horse, from a feather, or some ridiculous new fashion! Others value themselves for a well-trimmed beard, for curled locks, or soft hands; or because they can dance, sing, or play; but are not these effeminate men, who seek to raise their reputation by so frivolous and foolish things? Others, for a little learning, would be honored and respected by the whole world, as if every one ought to become their pupil, and account them his masters. These are called pedants. Others strut like peacocks, contemplating their beauty and think themselves admired by every one. All this is extremely vain, foolish, and impertinent; and the glory which is raised on so weak foundations is justly esteemed vain and frivolous.

True goodness is proved like true balm; for as balm, when dropped into water, if it sinks and rests at the bottom, is so accounted the most excellent and precious; so, if you would know whether a man be truly wise, learned, or generous, observe whether his qualifications tend to humility, modesty, and submission; for then they shall be good indeed; but if they swim on the surface, and strive to appear above water, they shall be so much the less true, in the same proportion as they appear. As pearls, that are conceived and nourished by the wind, or by the noise of thunder, have nothing of the substance of pearls, but merely the external appearance; so the virtues and good qualities of men that are bred and nourished by pride, ostentation, and vanity, have nothing but the appearance of good.

Honors, rank, and dignities, are like saffron, which thrives best, and grows most plentifully, when trodden under foot. It is no honor to be beautiful when a man prizes himself for it: beauty, to have a good grace, should be neglected; and learning is a disgrace to us when it degenerates into pedantry.

If we stand upon the punctilio for places, precedency, and titles, besides exposing our qualities to be examined, tried, and contradicted, we render them vile and contemptible; for as honor is beautiful when freely given, so it becomes base when exacted or sought after. When the peacock spreads his tail to admire himself, in raising up his beautiful feathers he ruffles all the rest, and discovers his deformities. Flowers that are fair whilst they grow in the earth wither and fade when handled; and as they that smell the mandrake at a distance perceive a most agreeable fragrance, whilst they that approach become sick and stupefied, so honors give a pleasant satisfaction to those that view them afar off, without stopping to amuse themselves with them, or being earnest about them. Those who affect them, or feed on them, are exceedingly blamable, and worthy of reprehension.

The pursuit and love of virtue begin to make us virtuous; but the pursuit and love of honor make us contemptible and worthy of blame. Generous minds do not amuse themselves about the petty toys of rank, honor, and salutation; they have other things to perform; such baubles only belong to degenerate spirits.

He that may have pearls never loads himself with shells; and such as aspire to virtue trouble not themselves about honors. Every one indeed may take and keep his own place without prejudice to humility, so that it be done carelessly. and without contention. For as they that come from Peru, besides gold and silver, bring also thence apes and parrots, because they neither cost much, nor are burdensome; so they that aspire to virtue refuse not the rank and honor due to them, provided it cost them not too much care and attention, nor involve them in trouble, anxiety, disputes, or contentions. Nevertheless, I do not here allude to those whose dignity concerns the public, nor to certain particular occasions of important consequences; for in these every one ought to keep what belongs to him, with prudence and discretion, accompanied by charity and suavity of manners.

CHAPTER V.

OF MORE INTERNAL HUMILITY.

BUT you desire, Philothea, to penetrate still deeper into humility; for what I have hitherto said rather concerns wisdom than humility. Let us, then, proceed. Many neither will not and dare not consider the particular favors God has done them, lest it might excite vainglory and self-complacency; but in doing so they deceive

themselves; for since the best means to attain the love of God (says the great angelical Doctor) is the consideration of his benefits, the more we know them the more shall we love him; and as the particular benefits he has conferred on us more powerfully move us than those that are common to others, so ought they to be more attentively considered. Certainly nothing can so effectually humble us before the mercy of God as the multitude of his benefits; nor so much humble us before his justice as the enormity of our innumerable offences. Let us, then, consider what he has done for us, and what we have done against him; and as we reflect on our sins, one by one, so let us consider his favors in the same order. We must not fear lest the knowledge of his gifts make us proud, so long as we are attentive to this truth, "that whatsoever there is of good in us is not from ourselves." Do mules cease to be disgusting beasts, because they are laden with the precious and perfumed goods of the prince? "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" says the apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 7. "And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory?" Nay, on the contrary, the lively consideration of favors received makes us humble, because a knowledge of them excites gratitude. But if, in considering the favors that God has conferred on us, any thoughts of vanity should attack us, it will be an infallible remedy to recur to the consideration of our ingratitudes, imperfections, and miseries. If we consider what we did when God was not with us, we shall easily be convinced that what we do while he is with us is not of our own exertion; we shall indeed rejoice

in it, because we enjoy it, but we shall glorify God, because he alone is the author of it. Thus the blessed Virgin confesses that God had done great things for her, but it is only to humble herself, and to glorify God: "My soul," says she, "doth magnify the Lord, because he has done great things for me." Luke i. 46, 49.

We often confess ourselves to be nothing, nay, misery itself, and the refuse of the world; but would be very sorry that any one should believe us, or tell others that we are really so miserable wretches. On the contrary, we pretend to retire, and hide ourselves, so that the world may run after us, and seek us out. We feign to wish ourselves considered as the last in the company, and sit down at the lowest end of the table; but it is with a view that we may be desired to pass to the upper end. True humility never makes a show of herself, nor uses many humble words; for she desires not only to conceal all other virtues, but principally herself; and, were it lawful to dissemble, or scandalize her neighbor, she would perform actions of arrogancy and haughtiness, that she might conceal herself beneath them and remain altogether unknown.

My advice, therefore, Philothea, is that we should either not accustom ourselves to words of humility, or else use them with a sincere interior sentiment, conformably to what we pronounce outwardly. Let us never cast down our eyes but when we humble our hearts; let us not seem to desire to be the lowest, unless we sincerely desire it. I think this rule so general as to admit of no

exception; I only add, that civility requires we should sometimes offer precedency to those who will doubtless refuse it, and yet this is neither duplicity nor false humility; for in this case, as the offer of precedency is only the beginning of honor, and since we cannot give it them entirely, we do well to give them the beginning. I say, though some words of honor or respect may not seem strictly conformable to the truth, yet they are sufficiently so, provided the heart of him that pronounces them has a sincere intention to honor and respect him to whom they are addressed, for although the words signify with some excess that which we would say, yet we do not act wrongly in using them when common custom requires it; however, I wish our words were always as nearly as possible suited to our affections, that so we might follow; in all and through all, a cordial sincerity and candor. A man that is truly humble would rather another should say to him that he is miserable, and that he is nothing, than to say it himself; at least, if he knows that any man says so he does not contradict it, but heartily agrees to it; for, believing it himself firmly, he is pleased that others entertain the same opinion.

Many say that they leave mental prayer to those that are perfect; that, as for themselves, they are unworthy to use it. Others protest they dare not communicate often, because they find themselves not sufficiently pure. Others fear they should bring disgrace upon devotion if they meddled with it, by reason of their great misery and frailty. Others refuse to employ their talents

in the service of God and their neighbor, saying they know their own weakness, and fear they should become proud if they proved instruments of any good; and that, in giving light to others, they should consume themselves in the flames of vanity. All this is nothing but an artificial kind of humility, false and malicious, whereby they tacitly and subtilely seek to find fault with the things of God; or, at the best, to conceal the love of their own opinion, humor, and sloth, under the pretext of humility. "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God either unto the depth of hell, or to the height above," said the prophet (Isaias vii. 11) to unhappy Achaz; and he answered, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." Oh! the wicked man! He would seem to bear an extreme reverence to God, and excuses himself, under the color of humility, from aspiring to that grace which the divine goodness offers him; but does he not see, that when God desires to give us his graces, it is pride to refuse them; that the gifts of God oblige us to receive them; and that it is humility to obey, and to comply as nearly as we can with his desires? The desire of God is, that we should be perfect, uniting ourselves to him, and imitating him as nearly as possible. The proud man, who trusts in himself, has just reason not to attempt anything; but he that is humble is so much the more courageous, by how much the more he acknowledges his own inability; and the more wretched he esteems himself the more confident he becomes; because he places his whole trust in God, who delights to display his omnipo-

tence in our weakness, and to elevate his mercy upon our misery. We may then humbly and devoutly presume to undertake all that may be judged proper for our advancement by those that conduct our souls.

To imagine we know what we do not know is folly; to desire to pass for knowing that of which we are ignorant is an intolerable vanity. For my part, as I would not make a parade of the knowledge even of that which I know; so, on the other hand, I would not pretend to be ignorant thereof. When charity requires it we must freely and mildly communicate to our neighbor, not only what is necessary for our instruction, but, also, what is profitable for our consolation; for humility, which conceals virtues, in order to preserve them, discovers them, nevertheless, when charity requires it, in order that we may enlarge, increase, and perfect them. In this respect humility imitates a certain tree in the Isles of Tylos, that at night closes up her beautiful carnation flowers, and only opens them to the rising sun; and as the inhabitants of the country say that those flowers sleep by night, so humility covers all our virtuous and human perfections, and never unfolds them except for the sake of charity, which, being not a human and moral, but a divine and heavenly virtue, is the true son of all other virtues, over which she ought always to have dominion. Hence we may conclude that those humilities which are prejudicial to charity are assuredly false.

I would neither pretend to be a fool nor a wise man; for if humility forbids me to conceal my

wisdom, candor and sincerity also forbid me to counterfeit the fool; and as vanity is opposite to humility, so artifice, affectation, and dissimulation are contrary to sincerity. But, if some great servants of God have pretended to be fools, to render themselves more abject in the eyes of the world, we must admire, but not imitate, them; for, having had peculiar and extraordinary motives that induced them to this excess, no one ought thence to draw any consequence for himself. David, when he danced and leaped before the ark of the covenant with an excess that ordinary decency could not admire, had no design to make the world believe him foolish; but, with all simplicity and openness, he made use of those exterior motions to express the extraordinary and excessive joy he felt in his heart; and when Michol, his wife, reproached him for it, as an act of folly, he did not regret to see himself vilified; but, continuing in a true and sincere manifestation of his joy, he testified that he was glad to be reproached for his God. Wherefore remember, Philothea, that if, for acts of a true and sincere devotion, the world shall esteem you mean, abject, or foolish, humility will make you rejoice at this happy reproach, the cause of wich is not in you, but in those that reproach you.

CHAPTER VI.

THAT HUMILITY MAKES US LOVE OUR OWN ABJECTION.

I PROCEED now, and tell you, Philothea, that in all, and through all, you should love your own abjection. But you will ask me what it is to love your own abjection. In Latin "abjection" signifies "humility," and "humility" signifies "abjection"; so that when our Lady, in her sacred canticle, says, that "all generations should call her blessed," because our Lord had regarded the "humility of his handmaid," her meaning is, that our Lord had graciously looked down on her abjection, her meanness, and lowliness, to heap his graces and favors upon her. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the virtue of "humility" and our "abjection"; for our "abjection" is the lowliness, meanness, and baseness that exists in us, without our knowledge; whereas, the virtue of "humility" is a true knowledge and voluntary acknowledgment of our abjection. Now, the main point of this humility consists in being willing, not only to acknowledge our abjection, but in loving and delighting in it; and this, not through want of courage and generosity, but for the greater exaltation of the divine Majesty, and holding our neighbor in greater estimation than ourselves. To this I exhort you; and, that you may comprehend me more clearly, I tell you that among the evils which we suffer some are abject, and others hon-

orable; many can easily accommodate themselves to those evils that are honorable, but scarce any one to such as are abject. You see a devout old hermit covered with rags; every one honors his tattered habit, and compassionates his sufferings; but if a poor tradesman, or a poor gentleman, be in the like case, the world despises and scoffs at him; and thus you see how his poverty is abject. A religious man receives a sharp reproof from his superior, or a child from his father, with meekness, and every one calls this mortification, obedience, and wisdom; but should a gentleman or lady suffer the like from another, and although it were for the love of God, it is then called cowardice and want of spirit. Behold, then, here another evil that is abject. One has a canker in his arm, and another in his face; the first has only the disease, but the other, together with the disease, has contempt, disgrace, and abjection. I say, then, that we must not only love the evil, which is the duty of patience, but also embrace the abjection, by virtue of humility. There are, moreover, virtues which are abject, and virtues which are honorable. Patience, meekness, simplicity, and even humility itself, are virtues which worldlings consider as mean and abject; whilst, on the contrary, they hold prudence, fortitude, and liberality, in the highest estimation. There are also actions of *one* and the same *virtue*, some of which are despised and others honored; to give alms, and forgive injuries, are both acts of *charity;* yet the first is honored, whilst the latter is despised in the eyes of the world. A young gentleman or lady who

refuses to join in the disorders of a debauched company, or to talk, play, dance, drink, or dress, as the rest do, will incur their scorn and censure; and their modesty will be termed bigotry or affectation; to love this is to love our own abjection.

Behold an abjection of another kind. We go to visit the sick; if I am sent to the most miserable, it will be to me an abjection according to the world, for which reason I will love it. If I am sent to a person of quality, it is an abjection according to the spirit, for there is not so much virtue or merit in it, and therefore I will love this abjection. One falls in the midst of the street, and, besides his fall, receives shame; we must love this abjection. There are even faults which have no other ill in them besides abjection; and humility does not require that we should deliberately commit them, but that we should not vex ourselves when we have committed them. Such are certain follies, incivilities, and inadvertencies, which as we ought to avoid before they are committed, for the sake of civility and discretion; so when they are committed, we ought to be content with the abjection we meet with, and accept it willingly, for the sake of practising humility.

I say yet more: should I, through passion or anger, have spoken any unbecoming words, wherewith God and my neighbor may have been offended, I will repent, and be sorry for the offence, and endeavor to make the best reparation I can, but yet will admit of the abjection, and the contempt which it has brought upon me: and could the one be separated from the other, I

would most cheerfully cast away the sin, and humbly retain the abjection.

But though we love the abjection that follows the evil, yet we must not neglect, by just and lawful means, to redress the evil that caused it, especially when it is of consequence; as, for example, should I have some disagreeable disorder in my face, I will endeavor to have it cured, but not with the intention of forgetting the abjection I received by it. If I have been guilty of some folly, which has given no one offence, I will give no apology for it; because, although it were an offence, yet it is not permanent; I could not, therefore, excuse it, but only with a view to rid myself of the abjection, which would not be agreeable to humility. But if, through inadvertence or otherwise, I should have offended or scandalized any one, I will repair the offence by some true excuse; because the evil is permanent, and charity obliges me to remove it. Besides, it sometimes happens that charity requires we should remove the abjection for the good of our neighbor, to whom our reputation is necessary; but in such a case, though we remove the abjection from before our neighbor's eyes, to prevent scandal, yet must we carefully shut it up in our heart for its edification.

But would you know, Philothea, which are the best abjections? I tell you plainly, that those are most profitable to our souls and most acceptable to God which befall us by accident, or by our condition of life; because we have not chosen them ourselves, but received them as sent by God,

whose choice is always better than our own. But were we to choose any, we should prefer the greatest, and those are esteemed such as are most contrary to our inclinations, provided that they be conformable to our vocation; for, as I have already said, our own choice spoils or lessens almost all our virtues. Oh, who will enable us to say: "I have chosen to be an abject in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners"?—Ps. lxxxiii. 11. No one certainly, Philothea, but he who, to exalt us, lived and died in such a manner as to become the reproach of men, and the abjection of the people. I have said many things to you which may seem hard to you in theory, but, believe me, they will be more agreeable than sugar or honey when you put them in practice.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW WE ARE TO PRESERVE OUR GOOD NAME IN THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY.

PRAISE, honor, and glory are not given to men for every degree of virtue, but for an excellence of a virtue; for by praise we endeavor to persuade others to esteem the excellency of those whom we praise; by honor we testify that we ourselves esteem them; and glory, in my opinion, is only a certain lustre of reputation that

arises from the concurrence of praise and honor, so that honor and praise are like precious stones, from a collection of which glory proceeds like a certain enamelling. Now, humility not enduring that we should have any opinion of our own excellence, or think ourselves worthy to be preferred before others, cannot permit that we should seek after praise, honor, and glory, which are only due to excellence; yet she consents to the counsel of the wise man, who admonishes us to be careful of our good name (Ecclus. xli. 15), because a good name is an esteem, not of an excellence, but only of an ordinary honesty and integrity of life, which humility does not forbid us either to acknowledge in ourselves, or to desire the reputation of it. It is true, humility would despise a good name if charity did not need it; but, because it is one of the foundations of human society, and that without it we are not only unprofitable, but prejudicial to the public, by reason of the scandal it would receive, charity requires, and humility consents, that we should desire it, and carefully preserve it.

Moreover, as the leaves, which, in themselves, are of little or no value, are, nevertheless, necessary, not only to beautify the tree, but also to preserve its young and tender fruits; so a good reputation, which, though of itself not very desirable, is, notwithstanding, very profitable, not only for the ornament of life, but also for the preservation of virtue, especially of those virtues which are as yet but weak and tender.

The obligation of preserving our reputation, and

of being actually such as we are thought to be, urges a generous spirit forward with a strong and agreeable impulse. Let us, then, preserve our virtues, dear Philothea, because they are acceptable to God, the sovereign object of all our actions. But as they who desire to preserve fruits are not content to cover them with sugar, but also put them into vessels that are proper to keep them; so, although the love of God be the principal preserver of our virtues, yet we may further employ our good name as very profitable for that purpose.

Yet we must not be over-nice in regard to the preservation of our good name; for those who are too tender and sensible in this point are like those persons who, for every slight indisposition, take physic, and, thinking to preserve their health, quite destroy it. Thus, persons, by endeavoring to maintain their reputation so delicately, entirely lose it; for by this tenderness they become whimsical, quarrelsome, and insupportable, and thus provoke the malice of detractors.

The overlooking and despising of an injury or calumny is, generally speaking, by far a more effectual remedy than resentment, contention, and revenge; for contempt causes them to vanish; whereas, if we are angry, we seem to own them. Crocodiles hurt only those that fear them, and detraction, those that are vexed by it. An excessive fear of losing our good name betrays a great distrust of its foundation, which is the truth of a good life. The inhabitants of towns that have wooden bridges over great rivers fear lest they should be carried away by every little flood, but

they that have bridges of stone only apprehend extraordinary inundations; so they that have a soul solidly grounded on Christian virtue despise the overflowing of injurious tongues; but those that find themselves weak are disturbed with every discourse. In a word, Philothea, he that is too anxious to preserve his reputation loses it; and that person deserves to lose honor who seeks to receive it from those whose vices render them truly infamous and dishonorable.

Reputation is but a sign to point out the residence of virtue; it is virtue, then, that must be preferred in all and through all; wherefore, should any one call you a hypocrite because you are devout, or a coward because you have pardoned an injury, laugh at him; for, although such judgments are passed on us by the weak and foolish, we must not forsake the path of virtue, even if we were to lose our reputation, because we must prefer the fruit before the leaves, viz., interior and spiritual graces before all external goods. It is lawful to be jealous, but not an idolator of our reputation; and, as we should not offend the eyes of the good, so we must not strive to satisfy those of the wicked. The beard is an ornament to the face of a man, and the hair to that of a woman; if the beard be plucked from the chin, and the hair from the head, it will hardly grow again; but if it be only cut, nay, though it be shaved close, it will soon be renewed, and grow stronger and thicker than ever; so, although our reputation be cut, or even shaved by the tongues of detractors, which David compares to sharp razors, we must

not make ourselves uneasy, for it will soon shoot forth again, not only as fair as before, but much more firm and durable. But if our vices and wicked course of life take away our reputation, it will hardly return, because it is pulled up by the root; for the root of a good name are virtue and probity, which, as long as they remain in us, can always recover the honor due to it.

If any vain conversation, idle habit, fond love, or custom of frequenting improper company blast our reputation, we must forsake these gratifications because our good name is of more value than such vain contentments. But if, for the exercise of piety, the advancement of devotion, or our progress towards heaven, men grumble, murmur, and speak evil of us, let us leave these, like curs, to bark at the moon; for should they, at any time, be able to cast an aspersion on our good name, and by that means cut and shave the beard of our reputation, it will quickly spring up again, and the razor of detraction will be as advantageous to our honor as the pruning-knife to the vine, which makes it abound and multiply in fruit.

Let us incessantly fix our eyes on Jesus Christ crucified, and proceed in his service with confidence and sincerity, but yet with wisdom and discretion; he will be the protector of our reputation; and, should he suffer it to be taken from us, it will be either to restore it with advantage, or to make us profit in holy humility, one ounce of which is preferable to ten thousand pounds of honors. Are we blamed unjustly, let us peaceably oppose truth against calumny; does the calumny continue, let

as also continue to humble ourselves, resigning our reputation, together with our soul, into the hands of God; we cannot secure it better. Let us serve God in evil and in good report (2 Cor. vi.), according to the example of St. Paul, that we may say with David (Ps. xviii.): "For thy sake, O Lord, I have borne reproach, and shame hath covered my face." I except, nevertheless, certain crimes, so horrid and infamous, that no man ought to suffer the false imputation of them, if he can justly acquit himself; and also certain persons, on whose reputation depends the edification of many; for, in these cases, according to the opinion of divines, we must quietly seek a reparation of the wrong received.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF MEEKNESS TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOR, AND REMEDIES AGAINST ANGER.

THE holy chrism, which, by apostolical tradition, we use in the Church of God for confirmations and consecrations, is composed of oil of olives mingled with balm, which, amongst other things, represents to us the two favorite and well-beloved virtues which shone forth in the sacred person of our Lord, and which he has strenuously recommended to us; as if by them our hearts ought to be in a particular manner consecrated to his service, and dedicated to his imitation. "Learn

of me," says he, "for I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. xii. 29.) "Humility" perfects us with respect to God; and "meekness," with regard to our neighbor. The balm, which, as I have before observed, always sinks beneath all other liquors, represents humility; and the oil of olives, that swims above, represents meekness and mildness, which surmount all things, and excel amongst virtues, as being the flower of charity, which, according to St. Bernard, is then in its perfection, when it is not only patient, but also meek and mild. But take care, Philothea, that this mystical chrism, compounded of meekness and humility, be within your heart, for it is one of the great artifices of the enemy to make many deceive themselves with the expressions and exterior appearance of these two virtues, who, not examining thoroughly their interior affections, think themselves to be humble and meek; whereas, in effect, there are no virtues to which they have less pretensions. This may be easily discovered, for, notwithstanding all their ceremonious mildness and humility, at the least cross word, or smallest injury, they exhibit an unparalleled arrogance. It is said that those who have taken the preservative which is commonly called "the grace of St. Paul," do not swell when they are bitten and stung by a viper, provided the preservative be of the best sort; in like manner, when humility and meekness are good and true, they preserve us from that swelling and burning heat which injuries are wont to raise in our hearts. But if, being stung and bitten by detractors and enemies, we

swell, and are enraged, it is a certain sign that neither our humility nor meekness is true and sincere, but only apparent and artificial.

That holy and illustrious patriarch Joseph, sending back his brethren from Egypt to his father's house, gave them this only advice: "Be not angry with one another by the way." Gen. xlv. 29. I say the same to you, Philothea; this wretched life is but a journey to the happy life to come; let us not, then, be angry with each other by the way, but rather march on with the troop of our brethren and companions meekly, peaceably, and lovingly; nay, I say to you, absolutely and without exception, be not angry at all if it be possible, and admit no pretext whatsoever to open the gate of your heart to so destructive a passion; for St. James tells us positively, and without reservation, "The anger of man works not the justice of God." St. James ii. 20. We must, indeed, resist evil, and restrain the vices of those that are under our charge constantly and courageously, but yet with meekness and compassion. Nothing so soon appeases the enraged elephant as the sight of a little lamb, and nothing so easily breaks the force of a cannon-shot as wool. We do not value so much the correction which proceeds from passion, though it be accompanied with reason, as that which proceeds from reason alone; for the reasonable soul, being naturally subject to reason, is never subject to passion but through tyranny; and, therefore, when reason is accompanied by passion, she makes herself odious, her just government being debased by the fellowship of

tyranny. Princes do honor to their people, and make them rejoice exceedingly, when they visit them with a peaceable train; but when they come at the head of armies, though it be for the common good, their visits are always disagreeable; for although they cause military discipline to be rigorously observed among their soldiers, yet they can never do it so effectually but that some disorders will always happen, by which the peasant will be a sufferer. In like manner, as long as reason rules, and peaceably exercises chastisements, corrections, and reprehensions, although severely and exactly, every one loves and approves it; but when she brings anger, passion, and rage, which St. Austin calls her soldiers, along with her, she rather makes herself feared than loved, and even her own disordered heart is always the sufferer. "It is better," says the same St. Austin, writing to Profuturus, "to deny entrance to just and reasonable anger, than to admit to it, be it ever so little; because, being once admitted, it is with difficulty driven out again; for it enters as a little twig, and in a moment becomes a beam; and if it can but once gain the night of us, and the sun set upon it, which the apostle forbids, it turns into a hatred, from which we have scarce any means to rid ourselves; for it nourishes itself under a thousand false pretexts, since there was never an angry man that thought this anger unjust.

It is better, then, to attempt to find the way to live without anger, than pretend to make a moderate and discreet use of it; and when, through our imperfections and frailty, we find ourselves

surprised, it is better to drive it away speedily than enter into a parley; for, if we give it ever so little leisure, it will become mistress of the place, like the serpent, who easily draws in his whole body where he can once get in his head.

But how shall I banish it? you may say. You must, my dear Philothea, at the first alarm, speedily muster your forces; not violently, not tumultuously, but mildly, and yet seriously; for as we hear the ushers in public halls and courts of justice crying *Silence*, make more noise than the whole assembly; so it frequently happens that, by endeavoring with violence to restrain our anger, we stir up more trouble in our heart than wrath has excited before; and the heart, being thus agitated, can be no longer master of itself. After this meek effort practise the advice which St. Austin, in his old age, gave the young bishop Auxilius. Do, says he, that which a man should do, if that befall you of which the man of God speaks in the Psalms: "My eye is troubled with wrath." Ps. xxx. Have recourse to God, crying out, "Have mercy on me, O Lord!" that he may stretch forth his right hand to repress your anger. I mean we must invoke the assistance of God, when we find ourselves excited to wrath, in imitation of the apostles when they were tossed by the wind and the storm upon the waters; for he will command our passions to cease, and a great calm shall ensue. But the prayer which is made against present and pressing anger must always be performed calmly, and not violently; and they must be observed in all the remedies

against this evil. Moreover, as soon as ever you perceive yourself guilty of an act of wrath, repair the fault immediately, by an act of meekness towards the same person against whom you were angry. For, as it is a sovereign remedy against a lie, to contradict it upon the spot, as soon as we perceive we have told it, so we must repair anger instantly by a contrary act of meekness; for fresh wounds are most easily cured.

Again, when your mind is in a state of tranquillity, supply yourself with meekness, speaking all your words, and doing all your actions, little and great, in the mildest manner possible, calling to mind, that as the Spouse in the Canticles has not only honey in her lips, on her tongue, and in her breast, but milk also, so we must not only have our words sweet towards our neighbor, but also our whole breast; that is to say, the whole interior of our soul; neither must we have the aromatic and fragrant sweetness of honey only, viz., the sweetness of civil conversation with strangers, but also the sweetness of milk amongst our family and neighbors; in which those greatly fail, who in the street seem to be angels, and in their houses demons.

CHAPTER IX.

OF MEEKNESS TOWARDS OURSELVES.

ONE of the best exercises of meekness we can perform is that of which the subject is within ourselves, in never fretting at our own imperfections, for though reason requires that we should be sorry when we commit any fault, yet we must refrain from that bitter, gloomy, spiteful, and passionate displeasure, for which many are greatly to blame, who, being overcome by anger, are angry for having been angry, and vexed to see themselves vexed; for by this means they keep their heart perpetually steeped in passion; and, though it seems as if the second anger destroyed the first, it serves, nevertheless, to open a passage for fresh anger on the first occasion that shall present itself. Besides, this anger and vexation against ourselves tend to pride, and flow from no other source than self-love, which is troubled and disquieted to see itself imperfect. We must be displeased at our faults, but in a peaceable, settled, and firm manner; for, as a judge punishes malefactors much more justly when he is guided in his decisions by reason, and proceeds with the spirit of tranquillity, than when he acts with violence and passion (because, judging in passion, he does not punish the faults according to their enormity, but according to his passion), so we correct ourselves much better by a calm and

steady repentance, than by that which is harsh, turbulent, and passionate; for repentance exercised with violence proceeds not according to the quality of our faults, but according to our inclinations. For example, he that affects chastity will vex himself beyond all bounds at the least fault he commits against that virtue, and will but laugh at a gross detraction he shall have been guilty of; on the other hand, he that hates detraction torments himself for a slight murmur, and makes no account of a gross fault committed against chastity; and so of others. Now, all this springs from this source, that these men, in the judgment of their conscience, are not guided by reason, but by passion.

Believe me, Philothea, as the mild and affectionate reproofs of a father have far greater power to reclaim his child than rage and passion; so when we have committed any fault, if we reprehend our heart with mild and calm remonstrances, having more compassion for it than passion against it, sweetly encouraging it to amendment, the repentance it shall conceive by this means will sink much deeper, and penetrate it more effectually, than a fretful, injurious, and stormy repentance.

If, for example, I had formed a strong resolution not to yield to the sin of vanity, and yet had fallen into it, I would not reprove my heart after this manner: "Art thou not wretched and abominable, that, after so many resolutions, hast suffered thyself to be thus carried away by vanity? Die with shame; lift up no more thy eyes to

heaven, blind, impudent traitor as thou art, a rebel to thy God;" but I would correct it thus, rationally saying, by way of compassion: "Alas, my poor heart, behold we are fallen into the pit we had so firmly resolved to avoid! Well, let us rise again, and quit it forever; let us call upon the mercy of God, and hope that it will assist us to be more constant for the time to come, and let us enter again the path of humility. Let us be encouraged; let us from this day be more upon our guard; God will help us; we shall do better;" and on this reprehension I would build a firm and constant resolution never more to relapse into that fault, using the proper means to avoid it by the advice of my director.

However, if any one should find his heart not sufficiently moved with this mild manner of reprehension, he may use one more sharp and severe, to excite it to deeper confusion, provided that he afterwards closes up all his grief and anger with a sweet and consoling confidence in God, in imitation of that illustrious penitent, who, seeing his soul afflicted, raised it up in this manner, Ps. xliii. 5: "Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to him, who is the salvation of my countenance, and my God."

Raise up your heart, then, again whenever it falls, but fairly and softly; humbling yourself before God, through the knowledge of your own misery, but without being surprised at your fall, for it is no wonder that weakness should be weak, or misery wretched: detest, nevertheless, with all

your power, the offence God has received from you, and return to your way of virtue, which you had forsaken, with great courage and confidence in his mercy.

CHAPTER X.

THAT WE MUST TREAT OF OUR AFFAIRS WITH DILIGENCE, BUT WITHOUT EAGERNESS OR SOLICITUDE.

THE care and diligence with which we should attend to our concerns must never be confounded with anxiety and solicitude. The angels are careful of our salvation, and procure it with diligence, yet they are never agitated by anxiety and solicitude; for care and diligence naturally result from their charity, whereas solicitude and anxiety are utterly incompatible with their felicity; because the former may be accompanied by a calm and tranquil state of mind, whereas the latter never can.

Be careful and attentive, then, O Philothea! to all those affairs which God has committed to your care, for such a disposition in you is agreeable to the will of his divine Majesty, without suffering your care and attention to degenerate into inquietude or anxiety; be not flurried about them, for an over-solicitude disturbs the reason and judgment, and prevents us from doing that properly for the execution of which we are so eager and anxious.

When our Lord reprehended Martha, he said: "Martha, Martha, thou art solicitous, and art troubled about many things. You must here observe, that she would not have been "troubled," had she been but merely diligent; but, being over-concerned and disquieted, she hurried and troubled herself, and therefore received this reprehension from our Lord. As rivers, that flow slowly through the plains, bear large boats and rich merchandise; and the rain, which falls gently in the open fields, makes them fruitful in grass and corn; or, as torrents and rivers, which run rapidly, and overflow the grounds, ruin the bordering country, and render it unprofitable for culture; so, in like manner, vehement and tempestuous rains spoil the fields and meadows. That work is never well executed which is done with too much eagerness and hurry. We must listen leisurely, according to the proverb. "He that is in haste," says Solomon, Prov. xix. 2, "is in danger of stumbling." We perform our actions soon enough when we perform them well. As drones, although they make more noise, and are more eager at work than bees, make only wax, and no honey, so they that hurry themselves with a tormenting anxiety, and eager solicitude, never do much, and the little they do perform is never very profitable.

As flies do not trouble us by their strength, but by their multitudes, so affairs of importance give us not so much trouble as trifling ones, when they are in great number. Undertake, then, all your affairs with a calm and peaceable mind, and en-

deavor to despatch them in order, one after another; for, if you make an effort to do them all at once, or in disorder, your spirit will be so overcharged and depressed, that it will probably sink under the burden without effecting anything.

In all your affairs rely wholly on Divine Providence, through which alone you must look for success; labor, nevertheless, quietly on your part, to coöperate with its designs, and then you may be assured, if you trust, as you ought, in God, the success which shall come to you shall be always that which is the most profitable for you, whether it appear good or bad, according to your private judgment. Imitate little children, who, as they with one hand hold fast by their father, with the other gather strawberries or blackberries along the hedges; so you, gathering and handling the goods of this world with one hand, must with the other always hold fast the hand of your heavenly Father, turning yourself towards him, from time to time, to see if your actions or occupations be pleasing to him; but, above all things, take heed that you never leave his protecting hand, nor think to gather more; for, should he forsake you, you will not be able to go a step further without falling to the ground. My meaning is, Philothea, that amidst those ordinary affairs and occupations, that require not so earnest an attention, you should look more on God than on them; and when they are of such importance as to require your whole attention, that then, also, you should look, from time to time, towards God, like mariners, who, to arrive at the

port to which they are bound, look more up towards heaven than down on the sea on which they sail; thus will God work with you, in you, and for you, and your labor shall be followed with consolation.

CHAPTER XI.

OF OBEDIENCE.

CHARITY alone can place us in perfection, but obedience, chastity, and poverty, are the three principal means to attain to it. Obedience consecrates our heart; chastity, our body; and poverty, our means, to the love and service of God. These three branches of the spiritual cross are grounded on a fourth, viz., humility. I shall say nothing of these three virtues, as they are solemnly vowed, because this subject concerns the religious only; nor even as they are simply vowed: for though a vow gives many graces and merits to virtues, yet, to make us perfect, it is not necessary they should be vowed, provided they be observed. For though being vowed, and especially solemnly, they place a man in the state of perfection; yet to arrive at perfection itself, it suffices that they be observed: there being a material difference betwixt the state of perfection and perfection itself; since all bishops and religious are in the state of perfection; and yet, alas! all are not arrived at perfection itself, as is too plainly to be seen

Let us endeavor, then, Philothea, to practise well these virtues, each one according to his vocation; for though they do not place us in the state of perfection, yet they will make us perfect; and, indeed, every one is obliged to practise them, though not all after the same manner.

There are two sorts of obedience, the one necessary, the other voluntary. By that which is necessary, you must obey your ecclesiastical superiors, as the Pope, the Bishop, the Parish Priest, and such as are commissioned by them; as also your civil superiors, such as your Prince, and the magistrates he has established for administering justice; and, finally, your domestic superiors, viz., your father and mother, master and mistress. Now, this obedience is called *necessary*, because no man can exempt himself from the duty of obeying his superiors, God having placed them in authority to command and govern, each in the department that is assigned to him. You must, then, of necessity obey their commands; but, to be perfect, follow their counsels also, nay, even their desires and inclinations, so far as charity and discretion will permit. Obey them when they order that which is agreeable, as to eat, or to take your recreation; for though there seems no great virtue to obey on such occasions, yet it would be a great vice to disobey. Obey them in things indifferent, as to wear this or that dress; to go one way or another; to sing or to be silent; and this will be a very commendable obedience. Obey them in things hard, troublesome, and disagreeable; and this will be a perfect obedience. Obey, in

fine, meekly, without reply; readily, without delay; cheerfully, without repining; and, above all, obey lovingly, for the love of him, who, through his love for us, made himself obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross, and who, as St. Bernard says, rather chose to part with his life than his obedience.

That you may learn effectually to obey your superiors, condescend easily to the will of your equals, yielding to their opinions in what is not sin, without being contentious or obstinate. Accommodate yourself cheerfully to the desires of your inferiors, as far as reason will permit; never exercise an imperious authority over them so long as they are good. It is an illusion to believe that we should obey with ease if we were religious, when we feel ourselves so backward and stubborn in what regards obedience to those whom God has placed over us.

We call that obedience voluntary to which we oblige ourselves by our own choice, and which is not imposed on us by another. We do not commonly choose our prince, our bishop, our father or mother; and even wives, many times, do not choose their husbands; but we choose our confessor and director. If, then, in choosing we make a vow to obey, as the holy mother *Teresa* did, who, as has been already observed, besides her obedience, solemnly vowed to the superior of her order, bound herself by a simple vow, to obey father Gratian; or if, without a vow we dedicate ourselves to the obedience of any one, this obedience is always called voluntary, on account of

its being grounded on our own free will and choice.

We must obey every one of our superiors, according to the charge he has over us. In political matters we must obey our prince; in ecclesiastical, our prelates; in domestic, our father, master, or husband; and, in what regards the private conduct of the soul, our ghostly father, or director.

Request your ghostly father to order you all the actions of piety you are to perform, in order that they may acquire a double value; the one of themselves, because they are works of piety; the other of obedience to his commands, and in virtue of which they are performed. Happy are the obedient, for God will never suffer them to go astray.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE NECESSITY OF CHASTITY.

CHASTITY, the lily of virtues, makes men almost equal to angels. Nothing is beautiful but what is pure, and the purity of men is chastity. Chastity is called *honesty*, and the possession of it *honor*; it is also named *integrity*, and the opposite, *vice*, *corruption*. In short, it has its peculiar glory, to be the fair and unspotted virtue of both soul and body.

It is never lawful to draw an impure pleasure

from our bodies in any manner whatsoever, except in lawful marriage, the sanctity of which may, by a just compensation, repair the damage we receive in that delectation; and yet, even in marriage itself, the honesty of the intention must be observed, to the end that, if there be any indecency in the pleasure that is taken, there may be nothing but honesty in the will that takes it.

The chaste heart is like the mother-pearl, that can receive no drop of water but such as comes from heaven; for it can accept of no pleasure but that of marriage, which is ordained from heaven; out of which it is not allowed so much as to think of it, so as to take a voluntary and deliberate delight in the thought.

For the *first degree* of this virtue, Philothea, beware of admitting any kind of forbidden pleasure, as all those are which are taken out of, or even in, marriage, when they are taken contrary to the rule of marriage. For the *second*, refrain as much as is possible from all unprofitable and superfluous delights, although lawful and permitted. For the *third*, set not your affection on pleasures and delights which are ordained and commanded; for though we must take these delectations that are necessary, I mean those which concern the end and institution of holy matrimony, yet we must never set our heart and mind upon them.

As to the rest, every one stands in great need of this virtue. They that are in the state of widowhood ought to have a courageous chastity.

to despise not only present or future objects, but to resist also the impure imaginations which former pleasures, lawfully received in marriage, may produce in their minds, which on this account are more susceptible of unclean allurements. For this cause St. Austin admires the purity of his friend Alipius, who had wholly forgotten and despised the pleasures of the flesh, of which, nevertheless, he had some experience in his youth.

In effect, as when fruits are entire and sound, they may be preserved, some in straw, some in sand, and some in their own leaves, but being once cut or bruised, it is almost impossible to preserve them but by honey and sugar, in the form of sweetmeats; so untainted chastity may many ways be kept; but, after it has once been violated, nothing can preserve it but an extraordinary devotion, which, as I have often repeated, is the true honey and sugar of the spirit.

Virgins have need of a chastity extremely sincere, nice, and tender, to banish from their hearts all sorts of curious thoughts, and to despise, with an absolute contempt, all sorts of unclean pleasures; which in truth deserve not to be desired by men, since they are better enjoyed by *swine*. Let, then, these pure souls be careful never to doubt but that chastity is incomparably better than all that which is incompatible with it; for, as the great St. Jerome says, the enemy violently tempts virgins to desire to make a trial of these pleasures, representing them as infinitely more agreeable and delightful than indeed they are, which often troubles them very much, whilst

as this holy father says, they esteem that more sweet of which they know nothing.

For as the little butterfly, seeing the flame, hovers with a curiosity about it, to try whether it be as sweet as it is fair, and, being borne away with this fancy, ceases not till it is destroyed at the very first trial; so young people suffer themselves frequently to be so possessed with the false and foolish opinion they have formed of the pleasure of voluptuous desire, that after many curious thoughts they at length ruin themselves, and perish in the flames; more foolish in this than the butterflies, for these have some cause to imagine that the fire is sweet, because it is so beautiful; but those knowing that which they seek to be extremely dishonest, cease not, nevertheless, to set a value on that brutish pleasure.

But as for those who are married, it is most true, though the vulgar cannot conceive it, that chastity is very necessary, also, for them; because, in respect of them, it consists not in abstaining absolutely from carnal pleasures, but in containing themselves in the midst of pleasures. Now as this commandment, *Be angry and sin not*, is, in my opinion, more difficult to be observed than this, *Be not angry;* and as one may more easily abstain from anger than regulate it; so it is easier to keep ourselves altogether from carnal pleasures than to preserve a moderation in them. It is true, that the holy liberty of marriage has a particular force to extinguish the fire of concupiscence; but the frailty of them that enjoys this liberty passes easily from per

mission to dissolution, and from use to abuse; and as we see many rich men steal, not through want but avarice, so also we may observe many married people fall into excess by mere intemperance and incontinency, notwithstanding the lawful object to which they ought and might confine themselves; their concupiscence being like wildfire, which runs burning here and there, without resting in any one place. It is always dangerous to take violent medicines, for if we take more than we should, or if they be not well prepared, they may be attended with fatal consequences. Marriage was blessed and ordained in part as a remedy for concupiscence, and, doubtless, it is a very good remedy, but yet violent, and consequently very dangerous, if it be not used with discretion.

I add, that the variety of human affairs, besides long diseases, oftentimes separates husbands from their wives; and therefore married people have need of two kinds of chastity: the one for absolute abstinence, when they are separated upon the occasions of which I have been speaking; the other for moderation, when they are together in the ordinary course. St. Catharine of Sienna saw, amongst the damned, many souls grievously tormented for having violated the sanctity of marriage, which happened, said she, not for the enormity of the sin, for murders and blasphemies are more enormous, but because they that commit it make no conscience of it, and thereof continue long in it.

You see, then, that chastity is necessary for all

classes of people: "Follow peace with all men," says the Apostle, "and holiness, without which no man shall see God;" by holiness is here understood "chastity"; as St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom observe. No, Philothea, no one shall see God without chastity; no one shall dwell in his holy tabernacle, that is not clean of heart; and, as our Saviour himself says, Apoc. xxii. 15, "Dogs and the unchaste shall be banished thence," and "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." St. Matt. v. 8.

CHAPTER XIII.

ADVICE HOW TO PRESERVE CHASTITY.

BE exceedingly diligent in turning yourself from all the approaches and allurements of incontinency: for this evil works insensibly, and, from small beginnings, advances to great accidents, which are always more easy to avoid than to cure.

Human bodies are like glasses, which cannot be carried, when they touch one another, without danger of being broken, or like fruits which, though ever so sound and seasonable, yet by touching one another are impaired. Water itself, in a vessel, be it ever so fresh, being once touched by any beast of the earth, cannot long retain its freshness. Never suffer any one, Philothea, to touch you uncivilly, either through play or love; for though perhaps chastity may be preserved in

those actions which are rather light than lewd, yet the freshness and flower of chastity always receive some detriment and loss; but to suffer yourself to be touched immodestly is the utter ruin of chastity.

Chastity depends on the heart as its source, yet regards the body as its subject; and therefore it may be lost as well by the exterior senses of the body as the interior thoughts and desires of the heart. It is impurity to behold, to hear, to speak, to smell, or touch any immodest thing in which the heart entertains itself, and takes pleasure. St. Paul says positively, "Let not fornication be so much as once named amongst you."

The bees not only have an aversion to carrion, but avoid and hate extremely all sorts of stench which proceed from it. The sacred Spouse, in the Canticles, has her hands distilling myrrh, which is the antidote against corruption; her lips are bound up with a scarlet ribbon, the mark of her modesty in her words; she has the eyes of a dove, by reason of her cleanness; her ears have gold earrings, in token of their purity; her nose is amongst the cedars of Lebanon, which are incorruptible wood; such ought to be the devout soul: chaste, clean, and pure, in hands, lips, ears, eyes, and in all her body.

To this purpose I will remind you of an expression which the ancient father John Cassian relates, as coming from the mouth of the great St. Basil, who, speaking of himself, said one day: "I know not what belongs to a woman, yet I am not a virgin. Certainly chastity may be lost as many

ways as there are kinds of immodesty and wantonness; so that, according as they are great or little, some weaken it, others wound it, and others destroy it entirely. There are certain indiscreet and sensual familiarities and passions, which, to speak properly, do not destroy chastity, and yet they weaken it, leave it languishing, and stain its beautiful whiteness. There are other familiarities and passions not only indiscreet, but vicious; not only fond, but dishonest; not only sensual, but carnal; and by these chastity is at least grievously wounded. I say, *at least;* because it dies by them, and perishes altogether, when these fooleries and wanton dalliances cause in the flesh the utmost effect of impure delight; for then chastity perishes in a more unworthy, more wicked, more wretched manner than when it is lost by fornication, or even by adultery and incest; since these latter kinds of filthiness are but sins, but the former, as Tertullian says in his book of Chastity, are monsters of iniquity and sin. Now, neither does Cassian believe, nor do I believe myself, that St. Basil spoke of any such disorder, when he accused himself of not being a virgin; but I am of opinion that he only said this in relation to pleasure in evil thoughts, which, though they had not defiled his body, yet had contaminated the purity of which generous souls are exceedingly jealous.

Frequent not the company of immodest persons, especially if they be also impudent, as is generally the case; for as when goats touch the sweet almond trees with their tongues, they make them become bitter: so these corrupted souls and in

fected hearts scarcely speak to any, either of the same or a different sex, without causing them to fall in some degree from purity; they have poison in their eyes and in their breath, like basilisks. On the contrary, keep company with the chaste and virtuous; often meditate upon and read holy things; for the word of God is chaste, and makes those also chaste that delight in it; which made David compare it to the Topaz,—a precious stone which has the property of assuaging the heat of concupiscence.

Keep yourself always near to Jesus Christ crucified, both spiritually by meditation, and really by the holy communion. For as they who lie on the herb called *agnus castus* become chaste and modest; so you, laying down your heart to rest upon our Lord, who is the true, chaste, and immaculate Lamb, shall see that your soul and your heart shall soon be cleansed from all the defilements.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF POVERTY OF SPIRIT TO BE OBSERVED IN THE MIDST OF RICHES.

"BLESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 3. Cursed, then, are the rich in spirit, for the misery of hell is their portion. He is rich in spirit who has riches in his spirit, or his spirit in riches; he is poor in

spirit who has no riches in his spirit, nor his spirit in riches. The halcyons form their nest like an apple, and leave only a little opening at the top; they build them on the sea-shore, and make them so firm and impenetrable that, although the waves surprise them, the waters never can get into them, but, keeping always firm, they remain in the midst of the sea, upon the sea and masters of the sea. Your heart, dear Philothea, ought to be in this manner open only to heaven, and impenetrable to riches and all transitory things. Whatever portion of them you may possess, keep your heart free from the least affection towards them; keep it always above them, and amidst riches let it hold them in contempt, and be the master of riches. Do not suffer this heavenly spirit to be the captive of earthly goods; let it be aways their master, but never their slave.

There is a material difference between having poison and being poisoned; as apothecaries have almost all kinds of poisons for use, on several occasions, and yet are not poisoned; because they have not poison in their bodies, but in their store: so you may possess riches without being poisoned with them, if you keep them in your house or purse, and not in your heart. To be rich in *effect* and *poor* in *affection* is the great happiness of a Christian; for by this means he has the benefit of riches for this world, and the merit of poverty for the world to come.

Alas! Philothea, no one ever acknowledges himself to be covetous; every one disavows that base and mean passion; every one excuses himself

on account of the charge of children, which oppresses him, and on that wisdom which requires that men should establish themselves in the world; he never has too much; some pretence is always found to procure more; nay, the most covetous not only deny they are avaricious, but even think in their conscience they are not so. Covetousness is a malignant fever, which makes itself so much the more insensible, by how much the more violent and ardent it is. Moses saw the sacred fire which burned the bush, and yet did not consume it; but this profane fire of avarice, on the contrary, consumes and devours the covetous person, and yet does not burn him, for, in the midst of the most violent heats of his avarice, he boasts of the most agreeable coolness in the world, and esteems his insatiable drought to be a natural and and pleasing thirst.

If you have a longing desire to possess the goods which you have not, though you may say you would not possess them unjustly, you are, nevertheless, truly covetous. He that has a longing, ardent, and restless desire to drink, although he would drink nothing but water, is certainly feverish.

O Philothea! I know not whether it be a justifiable desire to wish to have that justly which another justly possesses; for it seems by this desire we should serve our own convenience to the prejudice of another. If a man possesses anything justly, has he not more reason to keep it justly than we to desire it justly? Why, then, do we extend our desires to his possessions, to de

prive him of them? At the best, if this desire be just, it certainly is not charitable; for we would not, in any case, that another man should desire, although justly, that which we have a desire to keep justly. This was the sin of Achad, who desired to have Naboth's vineyard justly, which Naboth much more justly desired to keep; Achad desired with an ardent and impatient desire, and therefore offended God.

It is time enough, dear Philothea, to desire your neighbor's goods when he is desirous to part with them; for then his desire will make yours not only just, but charitable also; for I am willing you should take care to increase your wealth, provided it may be done, not only justly, but with peace and charity.

If you have a strong attachment to the goods you possess, if you be too solicitous about them, set your heart on them, have them always in your thoughts, and fear the loss of them with a sensible apprehension, believe me you are still feverish; for they that have a fever drink the water that is given them with a certain eagerness of attention and satisfaction which the healthy are not accustomed to have. It is impossible to take much pleasure in laughing without having an extraordinary affection for it.

If, when you suffer loss of goods, you find your heart disconsolate, believe me, Philothea, you have too great an affection for them; for nothing can be a stronger proof thereof than your affliction for their loss.

Desire not, then, with a full and express desire.

the wealth which you have not, and do not place your affection on that which you have; grieve not for the losses which may befall you, and then you shall have some reason to believe that, though rich in effect, you are not so in affection, but rather poor in spirit, and consequently blessed, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to you.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW TO PRACTISE TRUE AND REAL POVERTY, BEING, NOTWITHSTANDING, REALLY RICH.

THE painter, Parrhasius, painted the people of Athens in a very ingenious manner, representing their several variable dispositions, — choleric, unjust, inconstant, courteous, gentle, merciful, haughty, proud, humble, resolute, and timorous, and all this together. But I, dear Philothea, would infuse into your heart riches and poverty, a great care and a great contempt of temporal things.

Be more careful than worldly men are, to make your goods profitable and fruitful. Are not the gardeners of great princes more careful and diligent in cultivating and embellishing the gardens committed to their charge than if they were their own? And why? Because they consider them as the gardens of kings and princes, to whom they desire to make themselves acceptable by their services.

Philothea, our possessions are not our own, but were lent us by God to cultivate, and it is his will that we should render them fruitful and profitable, and therefore we do him an agreeable service in being careful of them; but then it must be a greater and more solid care than that which worldlings have of their goods; for they labor only for love of themselves, but we must labor for the love of God. Now, as self-love is violent, turbulent and impetuous, so the care which proceeds from it is full of trouble, uneasiness, and disquiet; and as the love of God is sweet, peaceable, and calm, so the care which proceeds from this love, although it be for worldly goods, is yet amiable, sweet, and agreeable. Let us, then, exercise this peaceable care of preserving, nay, of even increasing, our temporal goods, whenever just occasions shall present themselves, and as far as our condition requires, for God desires us to do so through love of him.

But beware lest self-love deceive you; for sometimes it counterfeits the love of God so closely that one would imagine it to be the same. Now, that it may not deceive you, and that the care of your temporal goods may not degenerate into covetousness, besides what I said in the former chapter, we must practise a real poverty in the midst of all the riches that God has given us.

Deprive yourself, then, frequently of some part of your property, by bestowing it on the poor with a willing heart; for to give away what we have is to impoverish ourselves in proportion as we give; and the more we give the poorer we become.

It is true, God will repay us not only in the next world, but even in this; for nothing makes us so prosperous in this world as alms; but till such time as God shall restore it to us we remain so much the poorer by as much as we have given. Oh, how holy and rich is that poverty which is occasioned by giving alms!

Love the poor and poverty, and you shall become truly poor, since, as the Scripture says, "we are made like the things which we love." Love makes the lovers equal. "Who is weak," saith St. Paul, "with whom I am not weak? He might have likewise said, Who is poor, with whom I am not poor? For love made him resemble those whom he loved; if, then, you love the poor you shall be truly a partaker of their poverty, and poor like them. Now, if you love the poor, be often in their company, be glad to see them in your house, and to visit them in theirs; converse willingly with them, be pleased to have them near you in the church, in the streets, and elsewhere. Be poor in conversing with them, speaking to them as their companion; but be rich in assisting, by imparting your goods to them, since you have more abundance.

Besides, Philothea, content not yourself to be as poor, but poorer than the poor themselves; but how may this be effected? The servant is lower than his master; make yourself, then, a servant of the poor; go and serve them in their beds when they are sick; serve them with your own hands; prepare their food for them yourself, and at your own expense; be their sempstress

and laundress. O Philothea! this service is more glorious than a kingdom.

I cannot sufficiently admire the ardor with which this counsel was practised by St. Lewis, one of the greatest kings that ever graced a throne; great in every kind of greatness. He frequently served at table the poor whom he maintained, and caused three poor men to dine with him almost every day, and many times ate the remainder of their food with an incomparable love. When he visited the hospitals, which he frequently did, he commonly served the leprous, ulcerous, and such as had the most loathsome diseases, kneeling on the ground, respecting in their persons the Saviour of the world, and cherishing them as tenderly as any fond mother cherishes her child. St. Elizabeth, daughter of the king of Hungary, often visited the poor, and, for her recreation, sometimes clothed herself like a poor woman among her ladies, saying to them, "If I were poor I would dress in this manner." Good God, Philothea, how poor were this prince and princess in the midst of their riches, and how rich in their poverty! Blessed are they who are poor in this manner, for to them belongs the kingdom of heaven. "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was naked, and you clothed me; come, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," he who is the King of the poor, as well as of kings, will say, when he addresses himself to the elect at the day of general judgment.

There is no one, who, on some occasion or other,

does not feel a want of some conveniency. Sometimes we receive a visit from a guest, whom we would entertain very well, but at present have not the means; at other times, our best clothes are in one place when we want them in another, where we must be seen. Again, sometimes all the wines in our cellar ferment and turn, so that there remain only those that are bad or green; at another time we happen to stop at some poor village, where all things are wanting; where we have neither bed, chamber, table, nor attendance; in fine, it is very often easy to suffer the want of something, be we ever so rich. Now, this is to be poor in effect, with regard to the things we want. Philothea, rejoice on these occasions, accept them with a good heart, and suffer them cheerfully.

But should you meet with losses which impoverish you, more or less, as in the case of tempests, fires, inundations, dearths, robberies, or lawsuits, then is the proper season to practise poverty, receiving those losses with meekness, and submitting with patience and constancy to your impoverishment. Esau presented himself to his father with his hands covered with hair, and Jacob did the same; but as the hair on Jacob's hands belonged not to his skin, but his gloves, one might take away the hair without injuring the skin; on the contrary, the hair on the hands of Esau adhered to his skin, so that if any one would attempt to pluck off his hair it would have caused excessive pain. Thus, when our worldly goods cleave to our heart, if a tempest, a thief, or an impostor, should take any part of them from us,

what complaints, trouble, and impatience do we not fall into? But when our goods do not cleave to our hearts, and are only considered on account of the care God would have us take of them, should they be taken from us, we lose neither our peace nor our senses. Hence the difference betwixt beasts and men, as to their garments; for as the garments of the former, viz., their skin, adhere to their flesh, those of the latter are only put upon them, so that they may be taken off at pleasure.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW TO PRACTISE RICHNESS OF SPIRIT IN REAL POVERTY.

BUT if you be really poor, dear Philothea, be likewise, for God's sake, actually poor in spirit: make a virtue of necessity, and value this precious jewel of poverty at the high rate it deserves: its lustre is not discovered in this world, and yet it is exceedingly rich and beautiful.

Be patient; you are in good company; our Lord himself, his blessed mother, the apostles, and innumerable saints, both men and women, have been poor; nay, even when they might have been rich, they refused to be so. How many great personages have there been, who, in spite of contradictions from the world, have gone to seek after holy poverty in cloisters and hospitals, and took indefatigable pains to find her! Witness

St. Alexius, St. Paula, St. Paulinus, St. Angela, and so many others; and behold, Philothea, this holy poverty, more gracious towards you, comes to present herself to you in your own lodging; you have met her without being at the trouble of seeking after her; embrace her, then, as the dear friend of Jesus Christ, who was born, who lived, and who died in poverty; poverty was his nurse during the whole course of his life.

Your poverty, Philothea, enjoys two great privileges, by means of which you may considerably enhance its merits. The first is, that she came not to you by choice, but by the will of God, who has made you poor, without any concurrence of your own will. Now, that which we receive purely from the will of God is always very agreeable to him, provided that we receive it with a good heart, and through a love of his holy will; where there is least of our own there is most of God; the simple and pure acceptance of God's will makes our offerings extremely pure.

The second privilege of this kind of poverty is that it is truly poverty. That poverty which is praised, caressed, esteemed, succored, and assisted is nearly allied to riches; at least, it is not altogether poverty; but that which is despised, rejected, reproached, and abandoned, is poverty indeed. Such is ordinary poverty; for, as the poor are not poor by their own choice, but from necessity, their poverty is not much esteemed, for which reason their poverty exceeds that of the religious; although otherwise the poverty of the religious has a very great excellency, and is much

more commendable, by reason of the vow, and of the intention for which it is chosen.

Complain not, then, my dear Philothea, of your poverty; for we never complain but of that which displeases us; and if poverty displease you, you are no longer poor in spirit, but rich in affection.

Be not disconsolate for your not being so well assisted as might appear necessary; for in this consists the excellence of poverty. To be willing to be poor, and not to feel the hardships of poverty, is to desire the honor of poverty with the convenience of riches.

Be not ashamed to be poor, nor to ask alms in charity. Receive with humility what shall be given you, and bear the denial with meekness. Frequently remember the journey our blessed Lady undertook into Egypt, to preserve the life of her dear Son, and how much contempt, poverty, and misery she was obliged to suffer; provided you live thus, you will be very rich in your poverty.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF FRIENDSHIP; FIRST OF THAT WHICH IS EVIL AND FRIVOLOUS.

LOVE holds the first place among the several passions of the soul; it is the sovereign of all the motions of the heart; it directs all the rest towards it, and makes us such as is the object of its love. Be careful, then, O Philothea! to

entertain no evil love, for, if you do, you will presently become evil. Friendship is the most dangerous love of all; because other loves may be without communication; but friendship, being wholly grounded upon it, we can hardly hold a communication of friendship with any person without partaking of its qualities.

All love is not friendship; for when one loves without being again beloved, then there is love, but not friendship; because friendship is a communication of love, therefore, where love is not mutual, there can be no friendship. Nor is it enough that it be mutual, but the parties that love each other must know their mutual affection, for, if they know it not, they have love, but not friendship. There must be also some kind of communication between them, which may be the ground of friendship. Now, according to the diversity of the communications, the friendship also differs, and the communications are different according to the variety of the things which they communicate to each other; if they be false and vain, the friendship is also false and vain; if they be true, the friendship is likewise true; and the more laudable the goods may be the more laudable also is the friendship. For as that honey is best which is gathered from the blossom of the most exquisite flowers, so that love which is founded upon the most exquisite communication is the most noble. And as there is honey in Heraclea of Pontus, which is poisonous. and deprives those of reason that eat it, because it is gathered from the aconite, which abounds in that country; even so the friend-

ship, grounded upon the communication of false and vicious goods, is altogether false and vicious.

The communication of carnal pleasures is a mutual inclination and brutish allurement, which can no more bear the name of friendship among men than that of beasts for the like effects; and if there was no other communication in marriage there would be no friendship at all; but because, besides that, there is a communication in matrimony of life, of industry, of goods, of affections, and of an indissoluble fidelity, therefore the friendship of matrimony is a true and holy friendship. A friendship that is grounded on the communication of sensual pleasures is utterly gross, and unworthy of the name of friendship; and so is that which is founded on virtues which are frivolous and vain; because these virtues also depend on the senses. I call those pleasures sensual which are immediately and principally annexed to the exterior senses; such as the pleasure to behold a beautiful person, to hear a sweet voice, to touch, and the like. I call certain vain endowments and qualities frivolous accomplishments, which weak minds call virtues and perfections. Observe how the greater part of silly maids, women, and young people talk; they hesitate not to say: Such a gentleman has many virtues and perfections, for he dances gracefully, he plays well at all sorts of games, he dresses fashionably, he sings delightfully, speaks eloquently, and has a fine appearance; it is thus that mountebanks esteem those, in their way, the most virtuous who are the greatest buffoons.

But as all these things regard the senses, so the

friendships which proceed from them are termed sensual, vain, and frivolous, and deserve rather the name of foolish fondness than of friendship; such are the ordinary friendships of young people which are grounded on curled locks, a fine head of hair, smiling glances, fine clothes, affected countenances, and idle talk; a friendship suited to the age of those lovers whose virtue is, as yet, only in the blossom, and their judgment in the bud; and, indeed, such amities being but transitory, melt away like snow in the sun.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF FOND LOVE.

WHEN these foolish friendships are maintained between persons of different sexes, without pretensions of marriage, they are called fond love; for being but embryos, or rather phantoms of friendship, they deserve not the name either of true friendship or true love, by reason of their excessive vanity and imperfection. Now, by means of these fondnesses, the hearts of men and of women are caught and entangled with each other in vain and foolish affections, based upon these frivolous communications and wretched complacencies of which I have been just speaking.

And although these dangerous loves, commonly speaking, terminate at last in carnality and down-

right lasciviousness, yet that is not the first design or intention of the persons between whom they pass; otherwise they would not be merely fond loves, but absolute impurities and uncleannesses. Sometimes even many years pass before anything directly contrary to the chastity of the body happens between them, whilst they content themselves with giving their hearts the pleasure of wishes, desires, sighs, amorous entertainments, and such like fooleries and vanities; and this upon different pretensions.

Some have no other design than to satisfy their hearts with loving and being loved, following in this their amorous inclination; and these regard nothing in the choice of their loves but their instinct: so that at the first meeting with an agreeable object, without examining the interior, or the comportment of the person, they begin this fond communication, and entangle themselves in these wretched nets, from which afterwards they find great difficulty to disengage themselves. Others suffer themselves to be carried to fond loves, by the vanity of esteeming it no small glory to catch and bind hearts by love. Now these aiming at glory in the choice they make set their net and lay their snares in specious, high, rare, and illustrious places. Others are led away at the same time, both by their amorous inclination and by vanity; for though their hearts be altogether inclined to love, yet they will not engage themselves in it without some advantage of glory. These loves are always criminal, foolish, and vain; criminal, because they end at length, and terminate

in the sin of the flesh, and because they rob God, the wife and the husband, of that love, and consequently of that heart, which belonged to them; foolish, because they have neither foundation nor reason: vain, because they yield neither profit, honor, nor content; on the contrary, they are attended by a loss of time, are prejudicial to honor, and bring no other pleasure than that of an eagerness in pretending and hoping, without knowing what they would have, or to what they would make pretensions. For these wretched and weak minds still imagine they have something to expect from the testimonies which they receive of reciprocal love; but yet they cannot tell what this is; the desire of which can never end, but goes on continually, pressing their hearts with perpetual distrusts, jealousies, and disquietudes.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his discourse, addressed indeed to vain women, but applicable also to men, says: "Thy natural beauty is sufficient for thy husband; but if it be for many men, like a net spread out for a flock of birds, what will be the consequence? He shall be pleasing to thee who shall please himself with thy beauty; thou wilt return him glance for glance, look for look; presently will follow smiles and little amorous words, dropped by stealth at the beginning, but soon after they will become more familiar, and pass to an open courtship. Take heed, my tongue! of telling what will follow: yet will I say this one truth: nothing of all those things which young men and women say and do together in these foolish complacencies is exempted from grievous

stings. All the links of wanton loves depend on one another, and follow one another as one piece of iron, touched by the loadstone, draws many others after it."

How wisely has this great bishop spoken! What is it you think to do? To give love? No; for no one gives love voluntarily, that does not receive it necessarily. He that catches in this chase is likewise caught himself. The herb *aproxis* receives and conceives fire as soon as it sees it: our hearts do the like: as soon as they see a soul inflamed with love for them they are presently inflamed with love for it. But some one will say, I am willing to entertain some of this love, but not too much. Alas! you deceive yourselves, the fire of love is more active and penetrating than you imagine: you think to receive but a spark, and will wonder to see it in a moment take possession of your whole heart, reduce all your resolutions to ashes, and your reputation to smoke. "Who will have pity on a charmer struck by a serpent?" Ecclus. xii. 13. And I also, after the wise man, cry out, O foolish and senseless people! think you to charm love in such a manner as to be able to manage it at pleasure? You would play with it, but it will sting and torment you cruelly; and do you know that every one will mock and deride you for attempting to charm or tie down love, and on a false assurance put into your bosom a dangerous serpent, which has spoiled and destroyed both your soul and your honor?

Good God! what blindness is this, to play away thus at hazard, against such frivolous stakes,

the principal power of our soul! Yes, Philothea, for God regards not man, but for his soul; nor his soul, but for his will; nor his will, but for his love. Alas! we have not near so much love as we stand in need of; I mean to say that we fall infinitely short of having sufficient wherewith to love God; and yet, wretches as we are, we lavish it away foolishly on vain and frivolous things, as if we had some to spare. Ah! this great God, who hath reserved to himself the whole love of our souls, in acknowledgment of our creation, preservation, and redemption, will exact a strict account of all these criminal deductions we make from it; for, if he will make so rigorous an examination into our idle words, how strictly will he not examine into our impertinent, foolish, and pernicious loves!

The walnut-tree is very prejudicial to the vines and fields wherein it is planted; because, being so large, it attracts all the moisture of the surrounding earth, and renders it incapable of nourishing the other plants; the leaves are also so thick that they make a large and close shade; and lastly, it allures the passengers to it, who, to beat down the fruit, spoil and trample upon all about it. These fond loves do the same injury to the soul, for they possess her in such manner, and so strongly draw her motions to themselves, that she has no strength left to produce any good work: the leaves, viz., their idle talk, their amusements, and their dalliance, are so frequent, that all leisure time is squandered away in them; and, finally, they engender so many temptations, distractions, sus-

picions, and other evil consequences, that the whole heart is trampled down and destroyed by them. In a word, these fond loves not only banish heavenly love, but also the fear of God from the soul; they waste the spirit and ruin reputation; they are the sport of courts, but the plague of hearts.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

LOVE every one, Philothea, with a strenuous love of charity, but have no friendship, except for those that communicate with you the things of virtue: and the more exquisite the virtues are, which shall be the matter of your communications, the more perfect shall your friendship also be. If this communication be in the sciences, the friendship is certainly very commendable; but still more so if it be in the moral virtues; in prudence, discretion, fortitude, and justice. But should your reciprocal communications relate to charity, devotion, and Christian perfection, good God! how precious will this friendship be! It will be excellent, because it comes from God; excellent, because it tends to God; excellent, because its very band is God; excellent, because it shall last eternally in God. Oh, how good it is to love on earth as they love in heaven; to learn to cherish

each other in this world, as we shall do eternally in the next!

I speak not here of that simple love of charity which we must have for all men; but of that spiritual friendship, by which two, three, or more souls communicate one to another their devotion and spiritual affections, and make themselves all but one spirit. Such happy souls may justly sing: "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Ps. cxxxii. 1. For the delicious balm of devotion distils out of one heart into another, by so continual a participation, that it may be said that God has poured out upon this friendship "his blessing and life everlasting." I consider all other friendships as but so many shadows in respect to this, and that their bonds are but chains of glass or of jet, in comparison of this bond of holy devotion, which is more precious than gold.

Make no other kind of friendship than this: I speak of such friends as you choose yourself; but you must not, therefore, forsake or neglect the friendships which nature or former duties oblige you to cultivate with your parents, kindred, benefactors, neighbors, and others.

Many perhaps may say: "We should have no kind of particular affection and friendship, because it occupies the heart, distracts the mind, and begets envy;" but they are mistaken, because having seen, in the writings of many devout authors, that particular friendships and extraordinary affection are of infinite prejudice to religious persons, they therefore imagine that it is the same with regard to the

rest of the world; but there is a material difference; for, as in a well-ordered monastery, where the common design of all tends to true devotion, it is not requisite to make these particular communications of friendship, lest by seeking among individuals for that which is common to the whole, they should fall from particularities to partialities. But for those who dwell among worldlings, and desire to embrace true virtue, it is necessary for them to unite themselves together by a holy and sacred friendship, since by this means they encourage, assist, and conduct each other to good: for, as they that walk on plain ground need not lend each other a hand, whilst they that are in a rugged and slippery road hold one by the other, to walk more securely; so they that are in religious orders stand in no want of particular friendships; but they that are in the world have need of them, to secure and assist each other amidst the many dangerous passages through which they are to pass. In the world all are not directed by the same views, nor actuated by the same spirit; we must therefore separate ourselves, and contract friendships according to our several pretensions. This particularity causes indeed a partiality; but it is a holy partiality, which creates no other division but that which of necessity should always subsist betwixt good and evil, sheep and goats, bees and hornets.

No one surely can deny but that our Lord loved St. John, Lazarus, Martha, and Magdalen, with a more sweet and more special friendship. We know that St. Peter tenderly cherished St. Mark

and St. Petronilla, as St. Paul did Timothy and St. Thecla. St. Gregory Nazianzen boasts an hundred times of the incomparable friendship he had with the Great St. Basil, and describes it in this manner: "It seemed that in us there was but one soul dwelling in two bodies, and if those are not to be believed, who say that all things are in all things, yet of us two you may believe, that we were both in each other; we had each of us one only pretension to cultivate virtue, and to accommodate all the designs of our life to future hopes; going in this manner out of mortal earth before we died in it." St. Austin testifies that St. Ambrose loved St. Monica entirely for the real virtue he saw in her, and that she reciprocally loved him as an angel of God. But I am blamable in detaining you so long on so clear a matter. St. Jerome, St. Austin, St. Gregory, St. Bernard, and all the greatest servants of God, have had very particular friendships, without any prejudice to their perfection. St. Paul, reproaching the disorders of the gentiles, accuses them that they were people without affection; that is to say, that they had no true friendship. And St. Thomas, with all the wisest philosophers, acknowledges that friendship is a virtue; and he speaks of "particular friendship," since, as he says, "perfect friendship cannot be extended to a great many persons." Perfection therefore consists, not in having no friendship, but in having none but with such as are good and holy.

CHAPTER XX.

OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUE AND VAIN FRIENDSHIPS.

OBSERVE, Philothea, this important admonition. As the poisonous honey of Heraclea is so similar to the other that is wholesome, that there is great danger of mistaking the one for the other, or of taking them mixed together (for the goodness of the one cannot destroy the poison of the other); so he must stand upon his guard who would not be deceived in friendships, particularly when contracted betwixt persons of different sexes, under what pretext soever. The devil often effects a change in those that love; they begin with virtuous love, with which, if not attended to with the utmost discretion, fond love will begin to mingle itself, then sensual love, and afterwards carnal love; yea, there is even danger in spiritual love, if we are not extremely upon our guard; though in this it is more difficult to be imposed upon, because its purity and whiteness make the spots and stains which Satan seeks to mingle with it more apparent, and therefore when he takes this in hand he does it more subtilely, and endeavors to introduce impurities by almost insensible degrees.

You may distinguish worldly from holy friendship in the same manner as the poisonous honey of Heraclea is known from the other; for as the honey of Heraclea is sweeter than the ordinary honey, on account of the juice of the aconite, which gives it

an additional flavor; so worldly friendship ordinarily produces a great profusion of endearing words, passionate expressions, with admiration of beauty, behavior, and other sensual qualities. Holy friendship, on the contrary, speaks a plain and sincere language, and commends nothing but virtue and the grace of God, the only foundation on which it subsists. As the honey of Heraclea, when swallowed, occasions a giddiness in the head, so false friendship produces a vertigo in the mind, which makes persons stagger in chastity and devotion, hurrying them on to affected, wanton, and immodest looks, sensual caresses, inordinate sighs, and ridiculous complaints of not being beloved, to a studied and enticing carriage, to gallantries, to interchanging of kisses, with other familiarities and indecent favors, the certain and unquestionable presages of the approaching ruin of chastity. But the looks of holy friendship are simple and modest; its caresses pure and sincere; its sighs are but for heaven; its familiarities are only spiritual; its complaints but when God is not beloved. These are infallible marks of a holy friendship. As the honey of Heraclea affects the sight, so this worldly friendship dazzles the judgment to such a degree, that they who are infected with it think they do well when they act wrongly, and believe their excuses and pretexts for two reasons: they fear the light, and love darkness. But holy friendship is clear-sighted, and never conceals herself, but appears willingly before those that are good. In fine, as the honey of Heraclea leaves a great bitterness in the mouth,

so false friendships change into lewd and carnal words and demands; and, in case of refusal, into injuries, slanders, imposture, sadness, confusion, and jealousies, which often terminate in madness. Chaste friendship is always equally honest, civil, and amiable, and changes only into a purer union of spirits; a lively image of the blessed friendship existing in heaven.

St. Gregory Nazianzen says, that as the cry of the peacock, when he struts and spreads his feathers, excites the peahens to lust, so, when we see a man dressed in his best apparel, approaching to flatter, and whisper in the ears of a woman, without pretension to lawful marriage, then no doubt it is to incite her to impurity; and every virtuous woman will stop her ears against the cry of this peacock, the voice of this enchanter, who seeks thus subtilely to charm her; but, should she hearken to him, good God! what an ill presage of the future loss of her heart!

Young people who use gestures, glances, and caresses, or speak words in which they would not willingly be surprised by their fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, or confessors, testify hereby that they are treating of something contrary to honor and conscience. Our blessed Lady was troubled when she saw an angel in the shape of a man, because she was alone, and because he gave her extraordinary though heavenly praises. O Saviour of the world! if purity itself be afraid of an angel in the shape of a man, why should not impurity fear a man, even though he should come in the

shape of an angel, especially when he praises her with sensual and earthly commendations?

CHAPTER XXI.

ADVICES AND REMEDIES AGAINST EVIL FRIENDSHIP.

BUT what remedies must we take against this multitude of filthy loves, fondnesses, and impurities? As soon as you perceive the first approach of them, turn suddenly away, with an absolute horror and detestation, run to the cross of your Saviour, take the crown of thorns, and press it to your heart, so that the evil spirit may not come near it. Beware of coming to any kind of compromise with this enemy: do not say I will hearken to him, but will do nothing of what he shall say to me: I will lend him my ears, but will refuse him my heart. Oh, no! Philothea; for God's sake, be resolute on these occasions: the heart and the ears correspond with each other; and, as it is impossible to stop a torrent that descends by the brow of a mountain, so is it hard to prevent the love which has entered in at the ear from falling suddenly down into the heart.

Alcmæon pretended that goats breathe by the ears, but Aristotle denies it; as for myself I cannot decide the question; but I know that our heart breathes by the ear; and as it sends forth its own thoughts by the tongue, so it receives th

thoughts of others by the ear. Let us, then, keep a diligent guard over our ears, that we may not inhale the corrupt air of filthy words, for otherwise our hearts will soon be infected. Hearken to no kind of propositions, under what pretext soever; in this case alone there is no danger of being rude and uncivil.

Remember that you have dedicated your heart to God, and that your love having been sacrificed to him, it would be a sacrilege to alienate the least part of it from him. Rather sacrifice it to him anew by a thousand resolutions and protestations; and, keeping yourself close within them, as a deer within its covert, call upon God, and he will help you, and take you under his protection, that you may live for him alone.

But if you are already entangled in the nets of filthy loves, good God! how difficult will it be to extricate yourself from them! Place yourself before the divine Majesty, acknowledge, in his presence, the excess of your misery, frailty, and vanity. Then, with the greatest effort of which your heart is capable, detest them; abjure the vain profession you have made of them; renounce all the promises received, and, with the most generous and absolute resolution, determine in your heart never to permit them to occupy the least thought for the remainder of your life.

An excellent remedy would be to withdraw yourself from the object; for as they that have been bitten by serpents cannot easily be cured in the presence of those who were before wounded by the same animal, so the person stung with love

will hardly be cured of this passion as long as he is near the other who has been similarly wounded. Change of place contributes very much to allay the heat and pains of grief or love. The youth of whom St. Ambrose speaks, in his second book of Penance, having made a long journey, returned home altogether delivered from those fond loves he had formerly entertained, and so much changed that his foolish mistress meeting him, and saying, "Dost thou not know me? am I not the same that I was?" — "Yes," answered he, "but I am no longer the same." Absence has wrought in him this happy change. St. Austin also testifies that, to mitigate the grief he suffered for the death of his friend, he withdrew himself from Tagasta, the place in which his friend died, and went to Carthage.

But what must he do who cannot withdraw himself? Let him absolutely retrench all particular familiarity, all private conversation, amorous looks, smiles, and, in general, all sorts of communication and allurement, which may nourish this dangerous passion; if he must speak to the other party, let it be only to declare, with a bold, short, and serious protestation, the eternal divorce which he has sworn. I call upon every one who has fallen into these wretched snares: cut them,— break them,— tear them; do not amuse yourself in unravelling these criminal friendships; you must tear and rend them asunder; do not untie the knots, but break or cut them, so that the cords and strings may be rendered useless; do not enter into any compromise with a love which is so contrary to the love of God.

But after I have broken the chains of his infamous bondage there will still remain some vestiges: the marks and prints of the irons will still be imprinted in my feet; that is, my affections. No, Philothea, they will not, provided you have conceived as great a detestation of the evil as it deserves; you will now be excited with no other motion but that of an extreme horror for this base love and all its appendages, and will entertain no other affection towards the forsaken object but that of a pure charity, for God's sake. But if through the imperfection of your repentance, there should yet remain in you any evil inclinations, procure a mental solitude for your soul, according to what I have taught you before, and retire thither as often as you can, and by a thousand reiterated ejaculations renounce all your criminal inclinations, and reject them with your whole force. Read pious and holy books with more than ordinary application; go to confession and communion more frequently; treat humbly and sincerely with your director, or some prudent and faithful friend, concerning all the suggestions and temptations of this kind which may befall you, and doubt not but God will deliver you from those criminal passions, provided you continue faithfully in these good exercises.

Ah, will it not be ingratitude to break off a friendship so unmercifully? Oh, how happy is that ingratitude which makes us pleasing to God! But no, Philothea, I tell you, in the name of God, this will be no ingratitude, but a great benefit, which you shall confer upon your lover; because,

in breaking your own bonds asunder, you shall also break his, since they were common to you both; and though for the present he may not be sensible of his happiness, yet he will soon acknowledge it, and exclaim with you in thanksgiving: "O Lord, thou hast broken my bonds, I will sacrifice to thee a sacrifice of praise, and call upon thy holy name." Ps. cxv.

CHAPTER XXII.

OTHER ADVICES ON FRIENDSHIPS.

I HAVE another important advice to give you on this subject. Friendship requires great communication between friends, otherwise it can neither grow nor subsist. Wherefore it often happens, that with this communication of friendship many other communications insensibly glide from one heart to another, by a mutual infusion and reciprocal intercourse of affections, inclinations, and impressions. This happens especially when we have a high esteem for him whom we love; for then we open our heart in such manner to his friendship that with it his inclinations and impressions, whether good or bad, enter rapidly. Certainly the bees, that gather the honey of Heraclea, seek nothing but honey; yet with the honey they insensibly suck the poisonous qualities of the aconite, from which they gather it. Good

God! Philothea; on these occasions we must carefully practise what the Saviour of our souls was accustomed to say: "Be ye good bankers," or changers of money; that is to say, "Receive not bad money with the good, nor base gold with the fine"; separate that which is precious from that which is vile; for there is scarcely any person that has not some imperfection. For why should we receive promiscuously the imperfections of a friend, together with his friendship? We must love him indeed, notwithstanding his imperfections; but we must neither love nor receive his imperfections; for friendship requires a communication of good, not of evil. Wherefore as they that draw gravel out of the river Tagus separate the gold which they find, to carry it away, and leave the sand on the banks; so they, who have the communication of some good friendship ought to separate it from the imperfections, and not suffer them to enter their souls. St. Gregory Nazianzen testifies, that many, loving and admiring St. Bazil, were brought insensibly to imitate him, even in his outward imperfections, as in speaking slowly, and with his spirit abstracted and pensive, in the fashion of his beard, and in his gait. And we often see husbands, wives, children, and friends, who, having a great esteem for their friends, parents, husbands, and wives, acquire, either by condescension or imitation, a thousand little ill-humors in their communication of friendship. Now this should not be so by any means, for every one has evil inclinations enough of his own, without charging himself with those of

others; and friendship is so far from requiring it, that, on the contrary, it obliges us mutually to aid and assist one another, in order to free ourselves from all kind of imperfections. We must, indeed, meekly bear with our friend in his imperfections; but we must not lead him into imperfections, much less imbibe his imperfections ourselves. But I speak only of imperfections; for, as to sins, we must neither occasion them, nor tolerate them in our friends. It is either a weak or a wicked friendship to behold our friend perish, and not to help him; — to see him die of an imposthume, and not dare to save his life by opening it with the lancet of correction. True and living friendship cannot subsist in the midst of sins. As the salamander extinguishes the fire in which he lies, so sin destroys the friendship in which it lodges. If it be but a transient sin, friendship will presently put it to flight by correction; but if it be habitual, and take up its habitation, friendship immediately perishes; for it subsists only upon the solid foundation of virtue. We must never, then, commit sin for the sake of friendship. A friend becomes an enemy when he would lead us to sin; and he deserves to lose his friend when he would destroy his soul. It is an infallible mark of false friendship to see it exercised towards a vicious person, be his sins of what kind soever; for, if he whom we love be vicious, without doubt our friendship is also vicious, since, seeing it cannot regard true virtue, it must needs be grounded on some frivolous virtue, or sensual quality. Society formed for traffic among merchants is but a shad-

ow of true friendship; since it is not made for the love of the person, but for the love of gain.

Finally, the following divine sentences are two main pillars, upon which reposes a Christian life; the one is that of the wise man: "He that feareth God shall likewise have a good friendship"; the other is that of the Apostle St. James: "The friendship of this world is the enemy of God."

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF THE EXERCISES OF EXTERIOR MORTIFICATION.

THEY who treat of agriculture tell us that if any word be written upon a very sound almond, and it be again enclosed in the shell and planted, all the fruit which that tree shall produce will have the same word engraven upon it. As for myself, Philothea, I could never approve of the method of those who, to reform a man, begin with his exterior, such as his gestures, his dress, or his hair; on the contrary, I think we ought to begin with his interior. "Be converted to me," said God, Joel ii., "with your whole heart." "Son, give me thy heart." Prov. xxiii. For, the heart being the genuine source of our actions, our works will always correspond to our heart. The divine Spouse, inviting the soul, Cant. v., "Put me," says he, "as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm. Yes, verily; for whoever has Jesus Christ

in his heart will quickly show him in all his exterior actions. I desire, therefore, dear Philothea, above all things else, to engrave upon your heart this sacred motto, "Live, Jesus"; being assured that your life, which proceeds from the heart as an almond tree from its kernel, will afterwards produce the same words of salvation written upon all your actions; for, as this sweet Jesus lives within your heart, so will he also live in all your exterior, in your eyes, your mouth, your hands, and even the hair on your head, so that you will be able to say, with St. Paul, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." In a word, he that has gained the heart has gained the whole man; but even this heart, by which we would begin, requires to be instructed how it should frame its exterior behavior, so that men may not only behold holy devotion therein, but also wisdom and discretion; for this end I desire your serious attention to the following short admonitions: —

If you are able to endure fasting, you would do well to fast some days besides those which are commanded by the Church; for besides the usual effects of fasting, viz., to elevate the spirit, to keep the flesh in subjection, to exercise virtue, and acquire a greater reward in heaven, it is a great means to restrain gluttony, and keep the sensual appetite and body subject to the law of the spirit; and although we may not fast much, yet the enemy fears us when he discovers that we know how to fast. Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays are the days in which the ancient Christians chiefly exercised themselves in abstinence; choose, then,

some of these days to fast, as far as your devotion and the discretion of your director shall advise you.

I would willingly say to you, as St. Jerome said to the pious Læta: "Long and immoderate fastings displease me greatly, especially in those that are yet in their tender age." I have learned, by experience, that young people, who become infirm through excess of fasting, easily give way to delicacies. We are greatly exposed to temptations, both when our body is too much pampered, and when it is too much weakened; for the one makes it insolent with ease, and the other desperate with affliction. The want of this moderation in the use of fasting, disciplines, hair-shirts, and other austerities, renders the best years of many unprofitable in the service of charity, as it did even in St. Bernard, who repented that he had used so much austerity; and the more cruelly they ill-treated their bodies in the beginning, the more were they constrained to favor them in the end. Would they not have done better to have mortified their bodies moderately, and in proportion to the offices and labors which their condition obliged them?

Labor, as well as fasting, serves to mortify and subdue the flesh. Now, provided the labor you undertake contributes to the glory of God and your own welfare, I would prefer that you should suffer the pain of labor rather than that of fasting. This is the intention of the Church, which exempts those labors that contribute to the service of God and our neighbor even from the fasts commanded.

Some find it painful to fast, others to serve the sick, or visit prisoners; others to hear confession, to preach, to pray, and to perform similar exercises; these last pains are of more value than the former; for, besides subduing the body, they produce fruits much more desirable, and therefore, generally speaking, it is better to preserve our bodily strength more than may be necessary, in order to perform these functions, than to weaken it too much; for we may always abate it when we wish, but we cannot always repair it when we would.

We should attend with great reverence to the admonition given by our blessed Saviour to his disciples, Luke x. 9: "Eat the things that are set before you." It is, in my opinion, a greater virtue to eat, without choice, that which is laid before you, and in the same order as it is presented, whether it be more or less agreeable to your taste, than always to choose the worst; for although this latter way of living seems more austere, yet the former has, notwithstanding, more resignation, since by it we renounce not only our own taste, but even our own choice; and it is no small mortification to accommodate our taste to every kind of meat, and keep it in subjection to all occurrences. Besides, this kind of mortification makes no parade, gives no trouble to any one, and is happily adapted to civil life. To set one kind of meat aside to eat another — to eat of every dish — to think nothing well dressed, or sufficiently exquisite — bespeak a heart too much attached to delicacies and dainties. I esteem St. Bernard in

drinking oil instead of water or wine, more than if he had drunk designedly the most bitter draught; for it was a sure sign that he did not consider what he drank; and in this indifference respecting our food consists the perfection of the practice of that sacred rule, "Eat that which is set before you." I except, however, such meats as may prejudice the health, or incommode the spirit, such as hot and high-seasoned meats; as also certain occasions, in which nature requires recreation and assistance in order to be able to support some labor for the glory of God. A continual and moderate sobriety is preferable to violent abstinences, practised occasionally, and mingled with great relaxations.

A moderate use of discipline awakens the appetite of devotion. The hair shirt mortifies the flesh exceedingly; but the use of it, generally speaking, is not proper either for married persons or tender complexions, or for such as have other great pains to support. However, upon some remarkable days of penance, it may be used by the advice of a discreet confessor.

We must dedicate the night to sleep, every one as much as his constitution requires, so that he may be able to watch and spend the day profitably; and also because the Holy Scriptures, the examples of the saints, and reason itself, strenuously recommend the morning to us as the most fruitful part of time, and our Lord himself is named the Orient, or rising sun, and our blessed Lady the dawning of the day. I think it a point of virtue to retire to rest early in the evening, that we may be enabled to awake and rise early

in the morning, which is certainly, of all other times, the most favorable, the most agreeable, and the least exposed to disturbance and distractions; when the very birds invite us to awake and praise God; so that early-rising is equally serviceable to health and holiness.

Balaam, mounted on his ass, was going to king Balak; but because he had not a right intention, the angel waited for him in the way, with a sword in his hand to kill them. The ass, on seeing the angel, stood still three several times, and became restive. Balaam in the mean time beat her cruelly with his staff to make her advance forward, until the beast at the third time, falling under Balaam, by an extraordinary miracle spoke to him, saying, Numb. xii. 28: "What have I done to thee? why strikest thou me, lo now this third time?" Balaam's eyes were soon opened, and he saw the angel, who said to him, "Why beatest thou thy ass? if she had not turned out of the way giving place to me, I had slain thee, and she should have lived." Then Balaam said to the angel, "I have sinned, not knowing that thou didst stand against me." Behold, Philothea, although Balaam be the cause of the evil, yet he strikes and beats his poor beast, that could not prevent it. It is often the same case with us; for example, a woman sees her husband or child sick, and presently betakes herself to fasting, hair-cloth, and the discipline, as David did on a similar occasion. Alas! my dear friend, you beat the poor beast, you afflict your body; but it cannot remedy the evil, nor is it on that account that God's sword is drawn against

you; correct your heart, which is an idolator of this husband, and which, having tolerated a thousand vices in this child, has destined it to pride, vanity, and ambition. Again, a man perceives himself frequently to relapse in a shameful manner into the sin of impurity; an inward remorse assails his conscience, and his heart returning to itself, he says, "Ah, wicked flesh! ah, treacherous body! thou hast betrayed me;" and immediately he inflicts great blows on his flesh, with immoderate fasting, excessive discipline, and insupportable hair-shirts. O poor soul! if thy flesh could speak, as Balaam's beast did, she would say to thee, "Why, O wretch! dost thou strike me?" It is against thee, O my soul! that God arms his vengeance; it is thou that art the criminal; why dost thou lead me into bad company? why dost thou employ my eyes, my hands, and my lips in wantonness? why dost thou trouble me with impure imaginations? Cherish good thoughts, and I shall have no evil motions; keep company with those that are modest and chaste, and I shall not be provoked to lust. It is thou, alas, that throwest me into the fire, and yet thou wouldst not have me burn; thou castest smoke into my eyes, and yet wouldst not have them inflamed. And God, without doubt, says to you in these cases, Beat, break, rend, and crush your heart to pieces, for it is against it principally that my anger is excited. Although, to remedy our vices, it may be good to mortify the flesh, yet it is still more necessary to purify our affections and refresh our hearts. But let us

never undertake corporal austerities without the advice of our spiritual director.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OF CONVERSATION AND SOLITUDE.

TO seek and avoid conversation are two extremes equally blamable in the devotion of those that live in the world, which is that of which we are now treating. To shun all conversations savors of disdain, and contempt of our neighbor; and to be addicted to them is a mark of sloth and idleness. We must love our neighbor as ourselves, and to prove that we love him we must not fly his company; and to testify that we love ourselves we must remain with ourselves when we are alone by ourselves. "Think first of thyself," says St. Bernard, "and then of others." If, then, nothing obliges you to go abroad into company, or to receive company at home, remain with yourself, and entertain yourself with your own heart; but if company visits you, or any just cause invites you into company, go in God's name, Philothea, and see your neighbor with a benevolent heart and a good intention.

We call those conversations evil which are held with an evil intention, or when the company is vicious, indiscreet, and dissolute; and must avoid them as bees shun wasps or hornets. For, as when

persons are bitten by mad dogs, their perspiration, their breath, and their very spittle, become infectious, especially for children, and those of a tender complexion; so vicious and dissolute persons cannot be visited without the utmost hazard and danger, especially by those whose devotion is as yet young and tender.

There are some unprofitable conversations held merely to recreate and divert us from our serious occupations, to which we must not be too much addicted, although we may allow them to occupy the leisure destined for recreation. Other conversations have civility for their object, as in the case of mutual visits, and certain assemblies made to do honor to our neighbor. With respect to these, as we ought not to be superstitious in the practice of them, so neither must we be uncivil in contemning them, but modestly comply with our duty in their regard, so that we may equally avoid both ill-breeding and levity.

It remains for us to speak of the profitable conversation of devout and virtuous persons. To converse frequently, Philothea, with such persons will be to you of the utmost benefit. As the vine that is planted amongst olive trees produces oily grapes, which have the taste of olives, so the soul which is often in the company of virtuous people cannot but partake of their qualities. As drones cannot make honey without the assistance of the bees, so it is of great advantage to us in the exercise of devotion to converse with those that are devout.

In all conversations, sincerity, simplicity, meek-

ness, and modesty should be preserved. There are some persons who make no gesture or motion without so much affectation as to trouble the company; and as he who cannot walk without counting his steps, or speak without singing, would be troublesome to the rest of mankind, so they who affect an artificial carriage, and do nothing without affectation, are very disagreeable in conversation, for in such persons there is always some kind of presumption. Let a moderate cheerfulness be ordinarily predominant in our conversation. St. Romuald and St. Anthony are highly commended, that, notwithstanding all their austerities, they had always both their countenance and their discourse adorned with joy, gayety, and courtesy. "Rejoice with them that rejoice." Rom. xii. 13. And again I say to you, with the Apostle, "Rejoice always, but in the Lord. Let your modesty be known to all men." Phil. iv. 4. To rejoice in our Lord, the subject of your joy must not only be lawful, but also decent; and this I say, because there are some things lawful, which yet are not decent; and, that your modesty may be known to all, keep yourself free from insolence, which is always reprehensible. To cause one of the company to fall down, to disfigure another's face, are foolish and insolent merriments.

But, besides that mental solitude to which you may retreat, even amidst the greatest conversation, as I have hitherto observed, P. ii. ch. 12, you ought also to love local and real solitude: not that you should go into the desert, as St. Mary of Egypt, St. Paul, St. Anthony, St. Arsenius, and

the other ancient solitaries, did; but that you should remain for some time alone by yourself in your chamber or garden, or in some other place, where you may at leisure withdraw your spirit into your heart, and recreate your soul with pious meditations, holy thoughts, or spiritual reading. St. Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of himself, says, "I walked with myself about sunset, and passed the time upon the sea-shore; for I am accustomed to use this recreation to refresh myself, and to shake off a little my ordinary troubles; and afterwards he relates the pious reflections he made, which I have already mentioned. St. Austin relates, that often going into the chamber of St. Ambrose, who never denied entrance to any one, he found him reading, and that after having remained awhile, for fear of interrupting him, he departed again without speaking a word, thinking that the little time that remained to this great pastor for recreating his spirit, after the hurry of his various affairs, should not be taken from him. And when the apostles one day had told our Lord how they had preached, and how much they had done, he said to them, Mark vi. 13: "Come ye apart into a desert place, and rest a little."

CHAPTER XXV.

OF DECENCY IN ATTIRE.

ST. PAUL desires that devout women, and the same may be said of men, should be attired in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety. 1 Tim. ii. 9. The decency and other ornaments of apparel depend on the matter, the form, and the cleanliness of them. As to the cleanliness, it should be almost always entire in our apparel, on which we should not permit any kind of filth to remain. Exterior neatness represents in some degree the cleanliness of the interior; and God himself requires corporal cleanliness in those that approach the altar, and have the principal charge of devotion.

As to the matter, form, and decency of our dress, it should be considered according to the several circumstances of the time, the age, the quality, the company, and the occasions. People are ordinarily better dressed on holidays, and this in proportion to the solemnity of the feast which is celebrated. In times of penance, as in Lent, their ornaments are laid aside. At marriages they put on wedding-garments; at funerals they use mourning; when near the prince they dress themselves in their best attire; which they put off when they are only amongst their own domestics.

The married woman may and ought to adorn herself when she is with her husband, and he desires

it; but if she should do so when she is at a distance from him, it will be asked, whose eyes she desires to favor? A greater liberty in point of ornaments is allowed to maidens, because they may lawfully desire to appear agreeable to many, although with no other intention than to gain one by holy marriage. Neither is it blamable in widows, who propose to marry, to adorn themselves, provided they betray no levity; for, having already been mistresses of families, and passed through the griefs of widowhood, they should be considered as being of a more mature and settled mind. But as for those that are widows indeed, not only in body, but in heart also, no other ornament becomes them but humility, modesty, and devotion; for, if they have an inclination to gain the love of men, they are not widows indeed; and, if they have no such desire, why do they carry about them the instruments of love? Old people are always ridiculous when they wish to be gay; this folly is only supportable in youth.

Be neat, Philothea; let nothing be negligent about you. It is a kind of contempt of those with whom we converse, to frequent their company in uncomely apparel; but, at the same time, avoid all affectation, vanity, curiosity, or levity in your dress. Keep yourself always, as much as possible, on the side of plainness and modesty, which, without doubt, is the greatest ornament of beauty, and the best excuse for the want of it.

St. Peter, 1 Epist. iii. 3, admonishes women in particular not to wear their hair much curled in tinglets and wreaths; but men who are so weak as

to amuse themselves about such toys are justly ridiculed for their effeminacy; and even women, who are thus vain, are esteemed to be very weak in their chastity; at least, if they are chaste, it is not to be discovered amidst so many toys and fopperies. They say they mean no evil by these things; but I again repeat that the devil thinks very differently. I would have devout people, whether men or women, the best dressed of the company, but the least pompous and affected; I would have them adorned with gracefulness, decency, and dignity. St Lewis says, in one word, that each one should dress according to his condition; so that the wise and the good may have no reason to complain that you do too much, nor young people to say that you do too little. But, in case young people will not content themselves with what is decent, we must conform to the judgment of the wise.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OF DISCOURSE AND, FIRST, HOW WE MUST SPEAK OF GOD.

AS physicians discover the health or sickness of a man by looking on his tongue, so our words are true indications of the qualities of our souls. "By thy words," says our Saviour, Matt. xii. 37, "thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." We readily move our hand

to the pain that we feel, and the tongue to the love we entertain.

If, then, Philothea, you are in love with God, you will often speak of him, in your familiar discourses with those of your household, your friends, and your neighbors: "For the mouth of the just will meditate on wisdom, and his tongue will speak judgment." Ps. xxxvi. 30. As bees, with their little mouths, touch nothing but honey; so should your tongue be always sweetened with its God, and find no greater pleasure than in the sweet praises and blessings of his name flowing between your lips, like St. Francis, who used to apply his tongue to his lips, after pronouncing the holy name of the Lord, to draw thence the greatest sweetness in the world.

But speak always of God as of God; that is, reverently and devoutly; not with ostentation or affectation, but with a spirit of meekness, charity, and humility, distilling as much as you can, as it is said of the Spouse in the Canticles, Cant. iv. 11, the delicious honey of devotion and of the things of God, imperceptibly, into the ears sometimes of one, and sometimes of another, and pray secretly to God, in your soul, that it would please him to make this holy dew sink deep into the heart of those that hear you.

Above all things, this angelical office must be done meekly and sweetly; not by way of correction, but inspiration; for it is surprising how powerfully a sweet and amiable manner of proposing good things attracts the hearts of the hearers.

Never, therefore, speak of God, or devotion, in a

slight or thoughtless manner, but rather with the utmost attention and reverence. I give you this advice, that you may avoid that remarkable vanity which is found in many false devotees, who upon every occasion speak words of piety and godliness by way of entertainment, without ever thinking of what they say, and afterwards falsely imagine themselves to be very devout.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OF MODESTY IN OUR WORDS, AND THE RESPECT WE OWE TO PERSONS.

"IF any offend not in words," says St. James, iii. 2, "he is a perfect man." Be careful never to permit an indecent word to escape from your lips; for, although you do not speak it with an ill intention, yet it may be hurtful to those that hear it. An evil word falling into a weak heart spreads itself like a drop of oil falling on linen; nay, it sometimes seizes on the heart in such a manner as to fill it with a thousand unclean thoughts and temptations to lust; for, as the poison of the body enters by the mouth, so the poison of the heart enters by the ear, and the tongue which utters an indecent word is a murderer. For, although perhaps the poison, which it has cast forth, has not produced its effect, because it found the hearts of the hearers guarded by some preservative, yet

there wanted no malice in the tongue to occasion their death. Let no man, therefore, tell me that he has no evil intention; for our Lord, the Searcher of hearts, has said, "That out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." But if we intend no evil on such occasions, yet the enemy, who is of a contrary opinion, secretly uses immodest words to pierce the heart of some one. As they that have eaten the herb angelica have always a sweet and agreeable breath, so they that have honesty and chastity, which is an angelical virtue, in their hearts, have their words always modest and chaste. As for indecent and obscene things the apostle will not have them even named amongst us; assuring us, "that nothing so much corrupteth good manners as wicked discourse."

When immodest words are disguised with affectation and subtility, then they become infinitely more poisonous; for, the more pointed the dart is, the more easily it enters our bodies; so, also, the more pointed an obscene word is, the more deeply does it penetrate the heart; and if they who esteem themselves men of gallantry for speaking such words were convinced that in conversation they should be like a swarm of bees, convened together to collect honey from some sweet and virtuous entertainment, they certainly would not thus imitate a nest of wasps, assembled together to suck corruption. If some impudent person should address you in a lascivious manner, convince him that your ears are offended, either by turning yourself immediately away, or by such other mark of resentment as your discretion may direct.

To become a scoffer is one of the worst qualities of a wit. God, who detests this vice, has heretofore inflicted remarkable punishments on its perpetrators. Nothing is so opposite to charity or devotion as despising and contemning our neighbor. As derision and mockery is never without *scoffing*, therefore divines consider it is one of the worst offences of which a man can be guilty against his neighbor, by words; for other offences may be committed with some esteem of the party offended, but by this he is treated with scorn and contempt.

As for certain good-humored jesting words, spoken by way of modest and innocent mirth, they belong to the virtue called *Eutrapelia* by the Greeks, which we may denominate *good conversation;* and by these we take an honest and friendly recreation from those frivolous occasions with which human imperfections furnish us. We must be careful, however, not to pass from honest mirth to scoffing; for scoffing excites laughter in the way of scorn and contempt of our neighbor; whereas innocent mirth and drollery cause laughter by an unoffending liberty, confidence, and familiar freedom, joined to the sprightly wit of some ingenious conceit. St. Lewis, when the religious offered to speak to him, after dinner, of high and sublime matters, told them: "It is not now a time to allege texts, but to recreate ourselves with some cheerful conceits; let every man say whatever innocent thing comes to his mind;" this he said when any of the nobility were present, to receive marks of kindness from his majesty. But let us remember, Philothea, to pass our time of recrea-

tion in such a manner that we may never lose sight of the greatest of all concerns, Eternity.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF RASH JUDGMENT.

"JUDGE not, and you shall not be judged," says the Saviour of our souls; "Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned." St. Luke vi. 37. "Judge not," says the holy apostle, "before the time; until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." 1 Cor. iv. 5. Oh, how displeasing are rash judgments to God! The judgments of the children of men are rash, because they are not the judges of one another, and therefore usurp to themselves the office of our Lord. They are rash, because the principal malice of sin depends on the intent in the heart, which is an impenetrable secret to us. They are not only rash, but also impertinent, because every one will find sufficient employment in judging himself, without taking upon him to judge his neighbor. To avoid future judgment it is as necessary to refrain from judging others as to be careful to judge ourselves. For, as our Lord forbids the one, so the apostle enjoins the others, saying, that "if we judged ourselves we should not be judged." But we act quite the contrary;

for, by judging our neighbor on every occasion, we do that which is forbidden; and, by not judging ourselves, we neglect to practise that which we are strictly commanded.

The remedies against rash judgments must be according to their different causes. There are some hearts naturally so bitter and harsh as to make everything bitter and harsh that they receive, converting *judgment*, as the prophet Amos says, into *wormwood*, by never judging their neighbors except with all rigor and harshness. These must seek the advice of a good spiritual physician, because this bitterness of heart, being natural to them, is subdued with difficulty; and though it be not in itself a sin, but an imperfection only, yet it is dangerous, because it introduces and causes rash judgment and detraction to reign in the soul. Some judge rashly, not through harshness, but through pride, imagining, that in the same proportion as they depress the honor of other men, they raise their own. Arrogant and presumptuous spirits, who admire and place themselves so high in their own esteem, look on all others as mean and abject. "I am not like the rest of men," said the foolish Pharisee. Luke xviii. 11. Others, who have not altogether this manifest pride, indulge a certain satisfaction in considering the evil qualities of other men, the more agreeably to contemplate, and make others admire the contrary good qualities wherewith they think themselves endowed; for this complacency is so secret and imperceptible as not to be discovered even by those who are tainted therewith. Others to

silence or assuage the remorse of their own consciences, very willingly judge others to be guilty of the same vices to which they themselves are addicted, or of some other vices equally as great; thinking that the multitude of offenders diminishes the guilt of the sin. Many take the liberty of judging others rashly, merely for the pleasure of delivering their opinion and conjectures on their manners and humors, by way of exercising their wit; and if, unhappily, they sometimes happen not to err in their judgment, their rashness increases to so violent an excess as to render it in a manner impossible ever to effect their cure. Others judge through passion and prejudice, always thinking well of what they love, and ill of that which they hate; excepting in *one case* only, not less wonderful than true, in which the excess of love incites them to pass an ill judgment on that which they love,—a paradoxical effect, which always proceeds from an impure and distempered love; and this is *jealousy*, which, as every one knows, on account of a mere look, or the least smile, condemns the person beloved of disloyalty or adultery. In fine, fear, ambition, and other similar weaknesses of the mind, frequently contribute towards the breeding of suspicious and rash judgments.

But what is remedy? As they who drink the juice of the herb of Æthiopia, called ophiusa, imagine that they everywhere behold serpents and other frightful objects; so they who have imbibed pride, envy, ambition, and hatred, think everything they see evil and blamable. The former, to be healed, must drink palm wine; and I say to the

latter, drink copiously of the sacred wine of charity, and it will deliver you from those noxious humors that engender rash judgment. As charity is afraid to meet evil, so she never seeks after it; but whenever it falls in her way she turns her face aside, and does not notice it. At the first alarm of evil she closes her eyes, and afterwards believes, with an honest simplicity, that it was not evil, but only its shadow or apparition; and if she cannot avoid sometimes acknowledging it to be real evil she quickly turns from it, and endeavors to forget even its shadow. Charity is the sovereign remedy for all evils, but for this especially. All things appear yellow to the eyes of those who are afflicted with the jaundice; and it is said, that to cure this evil they must wear celandine under the soles of their feet. The sin of rash judgment is indeed a spiritual jaundice, and causes all things to appear evil to the eyes of those who are infected; he that would be cured must not apply the remedies to his eyes, or his understanding; but to his affections, which are the feet of the soul. If your affections are mild, your judgment will also be mild; if your affections are charitable, your judgment will also be charitable. I shall here present you with three admirable examples: Isaac had said that Rebecca was his sister; Abimelech saw him playing with her, that is to say, caressing her in a tender manner, Gen. xxvi. 8, and presently he thought she was his wife. A malicious eye would rather have judged her to have been his harlot, or, if she were his sister, that he had been incestuous; but Abimelech embraced the most charitable opinion he could

concerning such an action. We must always do the same, Philothea, judging as much as possible in favor of our neighbors; and, if one action could bear a hundred faces, we should always consider that which is the fairest.

Our blessed Lady was with child, Matt. i. 9, and St. Joseph plainly perceived it; but, on the other hand, as he saw her holy, pure, and angelical, he could not believe she became pregnant in an unlawful manner; so that he resolved to leave her privately, and commit the judgment of her case to God; and though the argument was well calculated to make him conceive an ill opinion of his virgin spouse, yet he would never judge her; and why? Because, says the spirit of God, "he was a just man." A just man, when he can no longer excuse either the action, or the intention, of him whom otherwise he sees to be virtuous, nevertheless will not judge him, but endeavors to forget it, and leaves the judgment to God. Thus, our blessed Saviour on the cross, Luke xxiii. 24, not being able to excuse entirely the sin of those that crucified him, extenuated the malice of it by alleging their ignorance. When we cannot excuse the sin let us at least render it worthy of compassion, attributing it to the most favorable cause, such as ignorance or infirmity.

But can we never judge our neighbor? No, verily, never. It is God, O Philothea! that judges malefactors in public justice. It is true that he uses the voice of judges to make himself intelligible to our ears; they are his interpreters, and ought to pronounce nothing but what they have

learnt of him, as being his oracles; if they act otherwise, by following their own passions, then, indeed, it is they that judge, and who consequently shall be judged; for it is forbidden to men, in quality of men, to judge others.

To see or know a thing is not to judge it; for judgment, at least according to Scripture, presupposes some difficulty, great or small, true or apparent, which is to be decided; wherefore it says, John iii. 18, that "He who believeth not is already judged," because there is no doubt of his damnation. Is it not, then, a sin to doubt of our neighbor? No, for we are not forbidden to doubt, but to judge; however, it is only allowable to doubt or suspect as far as reason and arguments may constrain us, otherwise our doubts and suspicions will be rash.

If some evil eye had seen Jacob when he kissed Rachel by the well, or had seen Rebecca receive bracelets and ear-rings from Eliezer, a man unknown in that country, he would no doubt have thought ill of these two patrons of chastity; but without reason or foundation: for, when an action is in itself indifferent, it is a rash suspicion to draw an ill consequence from it, unless many circumstances give strength to the argument. It is also a rash judgment to draw an argument from an action, in order to blame the person; but this I shall hereafter explain more clearly.

In fine, those who have tender consciences are not very subject to rash judgment; for, as the bees in misty or cloudy weather keep in their hives to arrange their honey; so the thoughts of

good souls do not venture in search of objects that lie concealed amidst the cloudy actions of their neighbors; but, to avoid meeting them, they retire into their own hearts, to arrange the good resolutions of their own amendments.

It is natural to an unprofitable soul to amuse itself with examining the lives of other persons: I except spiritual directors, fathers of families, magistrates, etc., because a considerable part of their duty consists in watching over the conduct of others; let them discharge their duty with love, and, having done this, they must then attend to their own advancement in virtue.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OF DETRACTION.

RASH judgment engenders uneasiness, contempt of our neighbor, pride, self-complacency, and many other most pernicious effects; among which detraction, the bane of conversation, holds the first place. Oh that I possessed one of the burning coals of the holy altar to touch the lips of men, so that their iniquities might be taken away, and their sin cleansed, in imitation of the seraphim that purified the mouth of the prophet Isaias! Isai. vi. He that would deliver the world from detraction would free it from a great number of sins.

Whoever robs his neighbor of his good name is

not only guilty of sin, but is also bound to make reparation; for no man can enter into heaven with the goods of another; and, amongst all exterior goods, a good name is the best. Detraction is a kind of murder; for we have three lives, viz., the spiritual, which consists in the grace of God; the corporal, which depends on the soul; and the civil, which consists in our good name: sin deprives us of the first, death takes away the second, and detraction robs us of the third. But the detractor by one blow of his tongue commits three murders; he kills not only his own soul, and the soul of him that hears him, but also, by a spiritual murder, takes away the civil life of the person detracted; for, as St. Bernard says, both he that detracts and he that hearkens to the detractor have the devil about them; the one in his tongue, and the other in his ear. David, speaking of detractors, says, "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent." Ps. cxxxix. Now, as the serpent's tongue, according to Aristotle, is forked, and has two points, so is that of the detractor, who at one stroke stings and poisons the ear of the hearer, and the reputation of him against whom he is speaking.

I earnestly conjure you, then, dear Philothea, never to detract any one, either directly or indirectly; beware of falsely imputing crimes and sins to your neighbor; of discovering his secret sins, or of aggravating those that are manifest; or of making an evil interpretation of his good works; or of denying the good which you know that he possesses, or dissembling it maliciously, or diminishing it by words; for in all these ways you will highly offend

God, but, most of all, by false accusations, and denying the truth to the prejudice of a third person; for it is a double sin to calumniate and injure your neighbor at the same time.

They who preface detraction by protestations of friendship and regard for the person detracted, or who make apologies in his favor, are the most subtle and venomous of all detractors. "I protest," say they, "I love him; in every other respect he is a worthy man; but yet the truth must be told, he was wrong to commit so treacherous an action. She was very virtuous, but, alas! she was surprised," etc. Do you not perceive the artifice? As the dexterous archer draws the arrow as near as possible to himself, that he may shoot the dart away with greater force, so, when these detractors seem to draw the detraction towards themselves, it is only with a view to shoot it away with more violence, that it may pierce more deeply into the hearts of their hearers. But the detraction which is uttered by way of a witty jest is still more cruel than all the rest. For, as hemlock is not of itself a very quick, but rather a slow, poison, which may be easily remedied, yet being taken with wine is incurable; so detraction, which of itself might pass lightly in at one ear, and out at the other, remains in the minds of the hearers, when it is couched under some subtle and merry jest. "The venom of asps," says David, "is under their lips." The bite of the asp is almost imperceptible, and its venom at first produced a delightful itching, by means of which the heart and the bowels are

expanded, and receive the poison; against which there is afterwards no remedy.

Say not such a one is a drunkard, because you have seen him drunk; nor that he is an adulterer, because he has been surprised in that sin; nor that he is incestuous, because he has been guilty of that abominable action; for one act alone is not sufficient to constitute a vice. The sun stood still once in favor of the victory of Josue, and was darkened another time in favor of that of our Saviour; yet none will say that the sun is either immovable or dark. Noah was once drunk, and Lot another time, and this latter also committed a great incest; yet neither the one nor the other was a drunkard, nor was the latter an incestuous man. St. Peter had not a sanguinary disposition, because he once shed blood, nor was he a blasphemer, though he once blasphemed. To acquire the name of a vice or a virtue the action must be habitual; one must have made some progress in it. It is, then, an injustice to say that such a man is passionate, or a thief, because we have seen him once in a passion, or guilty of stealing. Although a man may have been a long time vicious, yet we are in danger of accusing him falsely if we call him vicious. Simon, the leper, called Magdalen a sinner, because she had been so not long before; yet he accused her falsely, for she was then no longer a sinner, but a most holy penitent; and therefore our Saviour took her cause under his protection. The proud pharisee considered the humble publican as a great sinner, or even perhaps an unjust man, an adulterer, an extortioner; but was greatly deceived,

for at that very time he was justified. Alas! since the goodness of God is so immense, that one moment suffices to obtain and receive his grace, what assurance can we have that he who was yesterday a sinner is not a saint to-day? The day that is past ought not to judge the day present, or the present day judge that which is past; it is only the last day that judges all. We can, then, never say a man is wicked without exposing ourselves to the danger of lying; all that we can say, if we must speak, is, that he did such bad actions, or lived ill at such a time; that he does ill at present; but we must never draw consequences from yesterday to this day, nor from this day to yesterday, much less to to-morrow.

Now, though we must be extremely cautious of speaking ill of our neighbor, yet we must avoid the contrary extreme, into which some fall, who, to avoid the sin of detraction, commend and speak well of vice. If a person be, indeed, a detractor, say not, in his excuse, he is a frank and free speaker; if a person be notoriously vain, say not that he is genteel and elegant; never call dangerous familiarities by the name of simplicity and innocence; nor disobedience by the name of zeal; nor arrogance by the name of freedom; nor lasciviousness by the name of friendship. No, dear Philothea, we must not, in order to avoid the vice of detraction, favor, flatter, or cherish vice; but we must openly and freely speak of evil, and blame that which is blamable; for in doing this we glorify God, provided we observe the following conditions: —

To speak commendably against the vices of another it is necessary that we should have in view the profit either of the person spoken of, or of those to whom we speak. For instance, when the indiscreet or dangerous familiarities of such or such persons are related in the company of young maids; or the liberties taken by this or that person, in their words or gestures, are plainly lascivious: if I do not freely blame the evil, but rather excuse it, these tender souls, who hear of it, will perhaps take occasion to allow themselves some such like liberties. Their advantage, then, requires that I should freely reprehend these liberties upon the spot, unless I could reserve this good office to be done better, and with less prejudice to the persons spoken of, on some other occasion.

It is, moreover, requisite that it should be my duty to speak on this occasion, as when I am one of the chief of the company; for, if I should keep silence, I would seem to approve of the vice; but if I be one of the least, I must not take upon me to pass my censure. But, above all, it is necessary that I should be so cautious in my remarks as not to say a single word too much. For example, if I blame the familiarity of this young man, and that young maid, because it is apparently indiscreet and dangerous, good God! Philothea, I must hold the balance so even as not to make the matter a single grain heavier. Should there be but a slight appearance, I will call it no more; if a mere indiscretion, I would give it no worse name; should there be neither indiscretion, nor real appearance

of evil, but only a probability that some malicious spirit may take from thence a pretext to speak ill, I will either say nothing at all, or say this only, and no more. My tongue, whilst I am speaking of my neighbor, shall be in my mouth like a knife in the hand of a surgeon, who would cut between the sinews and the tendons. The blow I shall give shall be neither more nor less than the truth. In fine, it must be our principal care in blaming any vice to spare, as much as possible, the person in whom it is found.

It is true, we may speak freely of infamous public and notorious sinners, provided it be in the spirit of charity and compassion, and not with arrogance and presumption, nor with complacency in the evils of others, which is always the part of a mean and abject heart. Amongst these, however, the declared enemies of God and his Church, such as the ringleaders of heretics and schismatics, must be excepted, since it is charity to cry out against the wolf, wherever he is, more especially when he is among the sheep.

Every one takes the liberty to censure princes and to speak ill of whole nations, according to the different affections they bear them. Philothea, avoid this fault; for, besides the offence against God, it may bring you into a thousand quarrels.

When you hear any one spoken ill of, make the accusation doubtful, if you can do it justly; if you cannot, excuse the intention of the party accused: if that cannot be done, express a compassion for him, change the topic of conversation, remembering yourself, and putting the company in mind,

that they who do not fall owe their happiness to God alone; recall the detractor to himself with meekness, and declare some good action of the party offended, if you know any.

CHAPTER XXX.

OTHER ADVICES WITH RESPECT TO CONVERSATION.

LET your language be meek, open, and sincere, without the least mixture of equivocations, artifice, or dissimulation; for although it may not be always advisable to say all that is true, yet it is never allowable to speak against the truth. Accustom yourself, therefore, never to tell a deliberate lie, either by way of excuse or otherwise; remembering always that God is the God of truth. Should you tell a lie inadvertently, fail not to correct it upon the spot by some explanation or reparation; an honest excuse has always more grace and force to bear one harmless than a lie.

Though one may sometimes prudently disguise the truth by some equivocation, yet it must never be done but when the glory and service of God manifestly require it; in any other case, such artifices are dangerous. The Holy Spirit dwells not in a deceitful soul. (Wisd. 1.) No artifice is so good and desirable as plain-dealing: worldly prudence and artifice belong to the children of the world; but the children of God walk uprightly,

and their heart is without guile. "He that walketh sincerely," says the wise man, Prov. x. 9, "walketh confidently." Lying, double-dealing, and dissimulation, are always signs of a weak and mean spirit. St. Austin had said, in the fourth book of his Confessions, that his soul and that of his friend were but one soul; and that he had a horror for his life after the death of his friend, because he was not willing to live by halves; and yet that for the same reason he was unwilling to die, lest his friend should die wholly. These words seemed to him afterwards so artful and affected, that he recalled them, and censured them in his book of Retractations. Observe, Philothea, the exactness of this holy soul with respect to the least artifice in his words. Fidelity, plainness, and sincerity of speech are the greatest ornaments of a Christian life: "I will take heed," says holy David, "to my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips." It was the advice of St. Lewis, in order to avoid contention, not to contradict any one in discourse, unless it were either sinful, or very prejudicial to acquiesce to him. But should it be necessary to contradict any one, or oppose our own opinion to his, we must do it with much mildness and dexterity, so as not to irritate his temper; for nothing is ever gained by harshness and violence.

To speak little, a practice so much recommended by all wise men, does not consist in uttering few words, but in uttering none that are unprofitable; for in point of speaking one is not to regard the

quantity so much as the quality of the words; but in my opinion we ought to avoid both extremes. For to be too reserved, and refuse to join in conversation, looks like disdain, or a want of confidence; and, on the other hand, to be always talking, so as to afford neither leisure nor opportunity to others to speak when they wish, is a mark of shallowness and levity.

St. Lewis condemned whispering in company, and particularly at table, lest it should give others occasion to suspect that some evil was spoken of them. "He that is at table," said he, "in good company, and has something to say that is merry and pleasant, should mention it so that all the company may hear him; but if it be a thing of importance, let him reserve it for a more suitable occasion."

CHAPTER XXXI.

OF PASTIMES AND RECREATIONS; AND, FIRST, OF SUCH AS ARE LAWFUL AND COMMENDABLE

IT is necessary sometimes to relax our minds, as well as our bodies, by some kind of recreation. St. John the Evangelist, as Cassian relates, amusing himself one day with a partridge on his hand, was asked by a huntsman, how such a man as he could spend his time in so unprofitable a manner? To whom St. John replied: "Why dost thou not carry thy bow always bent?"—"Be-

cause," answered the huntsman, "were it always bent, I fear it would lose its spring and become useless."—"Be not surprised, then," replied the apostle, "that I should sometimes remit a little of my close application and attention of mind to enjoy some little recreation, that I may afterwards employ myself more fervently in divine contemplation." It is doubtless a defect to be so rigorous and austere as neither to be willing to take any recreation ourselves, nor allow it to others.

To take the air, to walk, to entertain ourselves with cheerful and friendly conversations, to play on the lute or any other instrument, to sing to music, or go hunting, are recreations so innocent, that, in a proper use of them, there needs but that common prudence which gives to everything its due order, time, place, and measure.

Those games in which the gain serves as a recompense for the dexterity and industry of the body or of the mind, such as tennis ball, pall-mall, running at the ring, chess, and backgammon, are recreations in themselves good and lawful; provided excess, either in the time employed in them, or in the sum that is played for, be avoided; because, if too much time be spent in them, they are no longer an amusement, but an occupation, in which neither the mind nor the body is refreshed, but on the contrary stupefied and oppressed. After playing five or six hours at chess, the spirits are altogether fatigued and exhausted. To play long at tennis is not to recreate, but fatigue, the body; and if the sum played for be too great, the affections of the players become irregular; besides,

it is unjust to hazard so much upon skill of so little importance as that which is exercised at play. But, above all, Philothea, take particular care not to set your affections upon these amusements; for how innocent soever any recreation may be, when we set our hearts upon it, it becomes vicious. I do not say that you must take no pleasure whilst at play, for then it would be no recreation; but I say you must not fix your affection on it, nor spend too much time in it, nor be too eager after it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OF PROHIBITED GAMES.

THE games of dice, cards, and the like, in which the gain depends principally on hazard, are not only dangerous recreations, as dancing, but are, of their own nature, bad and reprehensible; hence they have been forbidden by the laws, as well ecclesiastical as civil. You will say, perhaps, what great harm can there be in them? The evil consists in this, that the gain is not acquired at these games according to reason, but chance, which often falls upon him whose ability or industry deserves nothing; and such a proceeding is repugnant to reason. But you will say, it is according to the agreement of the parties. That serves indeed to show that the winner does no wrong to the loser, but it justifies neither the agreement

nor the game; for the gain, which ought to be the recompense of industry, is made the reward of chance, which deserves no reward whatever, since it depends not at all upon us. Besides, although these games bear the name of recreations, yet they are by no means recreations, but tiresome occupations, for is it not tiresome to keep the mind incessantly occupied by an unremitted attention, and provoked by perpetual apprehensions and solicitudes? Can there be any attention more painful, gloomy, or melancholy, than that of gamesters? You must neither speak, laugh, nor cough, whilst they are at play, for fear of giving offence. In fact, there is no joy at play but when you win; and is not that joy iniquitous which cannot be felt but by the loss or displeasure of a friend or companion? Surely such satisfaction is infamous. For these three reasons this kind of gaming is prohibited.

St. Lewis, hearing that his brother, the Count of Anjou, and Monsieur Gautier de Nemours, were gaming, arose from his bed, to which he was confined by sickness, went staggering to their chamber, and taking the tables, the dice, and part of the money, threw them out of the window into the sea. The holy and chaste damsel, Sara, speaking in prayer to God, brings this argument of her innocency: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I have never joined myself with them that play." Tob. iii.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OF BALLS, AND PASTIMES WHICH ARE LAWFUL, BUT DANGEROUS.

ALTHOUGH balls and dancing be recreations of their own nature indifferent, yet, on account of the manner in which they are generally conducted, they preponderate very much on the side of evil, and are consequently extremely dangerous. Being generally carried on in the darkness and obscurity of night, it is by no means surprising that several vicious circumstances should obtain easy admittance, since the subject is of itself so susceptible of evil. The votaries of these amusements, by sitting up late at night, disable themselves from discharging their duty to God on the following morning. Is it not, then, a kind of madness to exchange the day for the night, light for darkness, and good works for criminal fooleries? Every one strives who shall carry the most vanity to the ball; and vanity is so congenial, as well to evil affections, as to dangerous familiarities, that both are easily engendered by dancing.

I have the same opinion of dances, Philothea, that physicians have of mushrooms: as the best of them, in their opinion, are good for nothing, so I tell you the best balls are good for nothing. If, nevertheless, you must eat mushrooms, be sure that they are well dressed. If upon some occasion, which you cannot well avoid, you must go to a

ball, see that your dancing be properly conducted. But you will ask me how must it be conducted? I answer, with modesty, gravity, and a good intention. Eat but sparingly, and seldom of mushrooms, say the physicians, for, how well soever they may be dressed, the quantity makes them poisonous; dance but little, and very seldom, I say, Philothea, lest otherwise you put yourself in danger of contracting an affection for it.

Mushrooms, according to Pliny, being spongy and porous, easily attract infection to themselves from the things which surround them; so that being near serpents and toads, they imbibe their poison. Balls, dancing, and other nocturnal meetings, ordinarily attract the reigning vices and sins together, such as quarrels, envy, scoffing, and wanton love; and as these exercises open the pores of the bodies of those that use them, so they also open the pores of their heart, and expose them to the danger of some serpent, seizing the favorable opportunity to breathe some loose words or lascivious suggestions into the ear, or of some basilisk casting an impure look, or wanton glance of love into the heart, which, being thus opened, is easily seized upon and poisoned. O Philothea! these idle recreations are ordinarily very dangerous; they extinguish the spirit of devotion, and leave the soul in a languishing condition; they cool the fervor of charity, and excite a thousand evil affections in the soul; and therefore they are not to be used but with the greatest caution.

But physicians say, that after mushrooms we must drink good wine; and I say, that after

dancing it is necessary to refresh our souls with some good and holy considerations, to prevent the baneful effects of those dangerous impressions which the vain pleasure taken in dancing may have left in our minds. But what considerations?

1. Consider that, during the time you were at the ball, innumerable souls were burning in the flames of hell, for the sins which they had committed or occasioned by their dancing. 2. That many religious and devout persons of both sexes were at the very time in the presence of God, singing his praises, and contemplating his beauty. Ah! how much more profitably was their time employed than yours! 3. That, whilst you were dancing, many souls departed out of this world in great anguish, and that thousands of men and women were then suffering dreadful pains in their beds, in hospitals, in the streets, by painful distempers, or burning fevers. Alas! they had no rest, and will you have no compassion for them? And do you not think that you shall one day groan, as they did, whilst others shall dance as you did? 4. That our blessed Saviour, his virgin Mother, the angels and saints, beheld you at the ball. Ah! how greatly did they pity you, seeing your heart pleased with so vain an amusement, and taken up with such childish toys! 5. Alas! whilst you were there time was passing away, and Death was approaching nearer; behold how he mocks you, and invites you to his dance, in which the sighs of your friends shall serve for the music, and where you shall make but one step from this life to the next. The dance of death is, alas! the true

pastime of mortals, since by it we instantly pass from the vain amusements of this world to the eternal pains or pleasures of the next. I have set you down these little considerations: God will suggest to you many more of a similar nature, provided you fear him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT WHAT TIME YOU MAY PLAY OR DANCE.

IN order that playing and dancing may be lawful we must use them as a recreation, without having any affection for them; we may use them for a short time, but we should not continue till we are wearied or stupefied with them; and we must use them but seldom, lest we should otherwise turn a recreation into an occupation. But on what occasions may we lawfully play and dance? Just occasions of innocent games are frequent, whilst those of hazard are rare, on account of their being more blamable and dangerous: wherefore, in one word, dance and play as your own prudence and discretion may direct you, to comply with the civil request of the company in which you are engaged: for condescension is a branch of charity which makes indifferent things good, and dangerous things allowable; it even takes away the harm from those things that are in some measure evil; and therefore

games of hazard, which otherwise would be reprehensible, are not so if we use them sometimes through a just condescension.

I was very much pleased to read, in the life of St. Charles Borromeo, how he condescended to the Swiss in certain things, in which otherwise he was very strict; and that St. Ignatius, of Loyola, being invited to play, did not refuse. As to St. Elizabeth, of Hungary, she played and danced sometimes, when she was present at assemblies of recreation, without any prejudice to her devotion; for devotion was so deeply rooted in her soul, that as the rocks about the lake of Rietta grow larger by the beating of the waves, so her devotion increased among the pomps and vanities to which her condition exposed her. Great fires increase by the wind; but little ones are soon blown out, if we carry them uncovered.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THAT WE MUST BE FAITHFUL, BOTH ON GREAT AND SMALL OCCASIONS.

THE sacred Spouse in the canticle says, that his Spouse has wounded "his heart with one of her eyes, and with one hair of her neck." Now, among all the exterior parts of the human body, none is more noble, either for its construction or activity, than the eye, and none more inconsiderable

than the hair. Wherefore the divine Spouse would give us to understand, that he is pleased to accept not only the great works of devout persons, but also the least and most trivial; and that, to serve him as he desires, we must take care to serve him well, not only in great and important things, but in those that are small and unimportant; since we may equally by the one and the other wound his heart with love.

Prepare yourself, then, Philothea, to suffer many great afflictions, even martyrdom itself, for our Lord; resolve to surrender to him whatever is most dear to you, when it shall please him to take it; father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, children; yea, even your eyes, or your life; for to all these sacrifices you ought to prepare your heart. But as long as divine Providence sends you not afflictions so sensible or so great, since he requires not your eyes, give him at least your hair. I mean, suffer meekly those small injuries, trifling inconveniences, and inconsiderable losses, which daily befall you; for by means of such little circumstances as these, managed with love and affection, you will engage his heart entirely, and make it all your own. These little daily charities; this headache, or toothache; this cold; this perverse humor of a husband or wife; this breaking of a glass; this contempt of scorn; this loss of a pair of gloves, of a ring, or a handkerchief; those little inconveniences which we suffer by retiring to rest at an early hour, and rising early to pray or communicate; that little bashfulness we have in performing certain acts of

devotion in public; in short, all these trivial sufferings, being accepted, and embraced with love, are highly pleasing to the divine goodness, who for a cup of cold water only has promised an eternal reward to his faithful servants. Wherefore, as these occasions present themselves every moment, to employ them to advantage will be a great means to heap up a store of spiritual riches.

When I saw in the life of St. Catharine, of Sienna, her many raptures and elevations of spirit, so many words of wisdom, nay, even profound instructions uttered by her, I doubted not but that, with the eye of contemplation, she had ravished the heart of her heavenly Spouse. But I was no less comforted when I found her in her father's kitchen, humbly turning the spit, kindling the fire, dressing the meat, kneading the bread, and performing the meanest offices of the house, with a courage full of love and affection towards her God; for I esteem no less the little and humble meditations she made in the midst of these mean and abject employments than the ecstasies and raptures she so often enjoyed, which were perhaps granted to her only in recompense of her humility and abjection. Her manner of meditating was as follows: whilst she was dressing the meat for her father she imagined that, like another St. Martha, she was preparing it for our Saviour, and that her mother held the place of the blessed Virgin, and her brothers that of the apostles; exciting herself in this manner to serve the whole court of heaven in spirit, whilst she employed herself with great delight in these humble services, because she knew that such was the will

of God. I have adduced this example, Philothea, that you may know of what importance it is to direct all your actions, how inconsiderable soever they may be, with a pure intention, to the service of his divine Majesty.

Wherefore I earnestly advise you to imitate the valiant woman whom the great Solomon so highly commends; "she hath put out her hands," he says, "to strong things"; that is, to high, generous, and important things, and yet disdained not to "take hold of the spindle." Prov. xxxi. Put out your hand to strong things, exercise yourself in prayer and meditation, in frequenting the sacraments, in exciting souls to the love of God, and infusing good inspirations into their hearts, and, in a word, in the performance of great and important works, according to your vocation; but never forget your distaff or spindle; or, in other words, take care to practise these low and humble virtues, which grow like flowers at the foot of the cross; such as serving the poor, visiting the sick, taking care of your family, and attending to all your domestic concerns, with that profitable diligence which will not suffer you to be idle; and, amidst all these occupations, mingle considerations similar to those I have related above of St. Catharine.

Great occasions of serving God present themselves seldom; but little ones, frequently. "Now he that shall be faithful in small matters," says our Saviour, "shall be set over great things. Perform all things, then, in the name of God, and you will do all things well; whether you eat, drink, sleep, recreate yourself, or turn the spit, provided you

know how to refer all your actions to God, you will profit much in the sight of his divine Majesty.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THAT WE MUST KEEP OUR MIND JUST AND REASONABLE.

IT is reason alone that makes us men, and yet it is a rare thing to find men truly reasonable; because self-love ordinarily puts us out of the paths of reason, leading us insensibly to a thousand small, yet dangerous, injustices and partialities; which, like the little foxes spoken of in the Canticles, destroy the vines; for, because they are little, we take no notice of them; but, being great in number, they fail not to injure us considerably.

Are not the things of which I am about to speak unjust and unreasonable? We condemn every trifle in our neighbors, and excuse ourselves in things of importance; we want to sell very dearly and to buy very cheaply; we desire that justice should be executed in another man's house, but mercy and connivance in our own; we would have everything we say taken in good part, but we are delicate and touchy with regard to what others say of us; we would insist on our neighbor parting with his goods, and taking our money; but is it not more reasonable that he should keep his goods, and leave us our money? We take it ill that he will not accommodate us; but has he not more

reason to be offended that we should desire to incommode him?

If we love one particular exercise we despise all others, and set ourselves against everything that is not according to our own taste. If there be any of our inferiors who is not agreeable, or to whom we have taken once a dislike, we find fault with all that he does, and we cease not on every occasion to mortify him. On the contrary, if the conduct of any one be agreeable to us, he can do nothing that we are not willing to excuse. There are some virtuous children, whom their parents can scarcely abide to see, on account of some bodily imperfections; and there are others that are vicious, who are favorites, on account of some corporal gracefulness. On all occasions we prefer the rich before the poor, although they be neither of better condition, nor more virtuous; we even prefer those who are best clad. We rigorously exact our own dues, but we desire that others should be gentle in demanding theirs; we keep our own rank with precision, but would have others humble and condescending; we complain easily of our neighbor, but none must complain of us; what we do for others seems always very considerable, but what others do for us seems as nothing. In a word, we are like the partridges in Paphlagonia, which have two hearts; for we have one heart, mild, favorable, and courteous towards ourselves, and another hard, severe, and rigorous towards our neighbor. We have two balances; one to weigh out to our own advantage, and the other to weigh in to the detriment of our

neighbor. "Deceitful lips," says the Scripture, Ps. xi. 3, "have spoken with a double heart," viz., two hearts; and to have two weights, the one greater, with which we receive, and the other less, with which we deliver out, is an abominable thing in the sight of God. Deut. xxv. 13.

Philothea, in order to perform all your actions with equity and justice, you must exchange situations with your neighbor; imagine yourself the seller whilst you are buying, and the buyer whilst you are selling; and thus you will sell and buy according to justice and equity; for, although small injustices, which exceed not the limits of rigor, in selling to our advantage, may not oblige to restitution; yet being defects contrary to reason and charity, we are certainly obliged to correct and amend them; at best, they are nothing but mere illusions; for, believe me, a man of a generous, just, and courteous disposition is never on the losing side. Neglect not, then, Philothea, frequently to examine whether your heart be such with respect to your neighbor as you would desire his to be with respect to you, were you in his situation; for this is the touchstone of true reason. Trajan, being blamed by his confidants for making the imperial majesty, as they thought, too accessible, said, "Ought I not to be such an emperor towards private men as I would desire an emperor to be towards me were I myself a private man?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

OF DESIRES.

EVERY one knows that we are obliged to refrain from the desire of vicious things, since even the desire of evil is of itself criminal; but I tell you, moreover, Philothea, you must not be anxious after balls, plays, or the like diversions, nor covet honors and offices, nor even visions and ecstasies; for there is a great deal of danger, deceit, and vanity in such things. Desire not that which is at a great distance, nor that which cannot happen for a long time, as many do, who, by this means, weary and distract their hearts unprofitably. If a young man earnestly desires to be settled in some office, before the proper time, what does all his anxiety avail him? If a married woman desires to be a nun, to what purpose? If I desire to buy my neighbor's goods before he is willing to sell them, is it not a loss of time to entertain this desire? If, whilst I am sick, I desire to preach, to celebrate mass, to visit others that are sick, and perform the exercises of those who are in health, are not all these desires in vain, since it is out of my power to put them in execution? Yet in the meantime these unprofitable desires occupy the place of the virtues of patience, resignation, mortification, obedience, and meekness under sufferings, which is what God wishes me to practise at that time; but we are often in the con-

dition of those who long for cherries in autumn, and grapes in the spring.

I can by no means approve that persons should desire to amuse themselves in any other kind of life than that in which they are already engaged; nor in any exercises that are incompatible with their present condition; for this dissipates the heart, and makes it unfit for its necessary occupations. If I desire to practise the solitude of a Carthusian, I lose my time; and this desire occupies the place of that which I ought to have to employ myself well in my actual state. No, I would not that any one should even desire to have more talents or judgment than he is already possessed of; for these desires are not only useless, but moreover occupy the place of those which every one ought to have, of cultivating the genius he inherits from nature; nor should any one desire those means to serve God which he has not, but rather diligently employ those which he has. Now, this is to be understood only of desires which totally occupy the heart; for, as to simple wishes, if they be not too frequent, they do no harm whatever.

Desire not crosses but in proportion to the patience with which you have supported those which have been already sent you; for it is presumptuous to desire martyrdom, and not have the courage to bear an injury. The enemy often suggests a great desire of things that are absent, and which shall never occur, so that he may divert our mind from present objects, from which, however trivial they may be, we might obtain

considerable profit to ourselves. We fight with the monsters of Africa, in imagination; and, in the meantime, for want of attention, we suffer ourselves to be killed by every insignificant reptile that lies in our way. Desire not temptations, for that would be rashness; but accustom your heart to expect them courageously, and to defend yourself against them when they shall come.

A variety of food, taken in any considerable quantity, overloads the stomach, and, if it be weak, destroys it; overcharge not then, your soul, either with a multitude of worldly desires, which may end in your ruin; or even with such as are spiritual, as they are apt to produce distractions. When the purified soul finds herself freed from bad humors she feels a craving after spiritual things; and, as one famished, she longs after a variety of exercises of piety, mortification, penance, humility, charity, and prayer. Philothea, it is a sign of good health to have a keen appetite; but you must consider whether you can well digest all that you wish to eat. Amongst so many desires, choose, then, by the advice of your spiritual father, such as you can execute at present, and turn them to the best advantage afterwards; God will send you others, which you may also practise in their proper season; and thus you will never lose your time in unprofitable desires, but bring them all forth in good order; but as to those which cannot be immediately executed, they should be reserved in some corner of the heart, till their time come. This advice I not only give to spiritual persons,

but also to those of the world; for, without attending to it, we could not live without anxiety and confusion.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MARRIED PERSONS.

"MATRIMONY is a great Sacrament, but I speak in Christ, and in the Church," Eph. v. 32. It is honorable to all persons, in all persons, and in all things, that is, in all its parts. To all persons, because even virgins ought to honor it with humility; in all persons, because it is equally holy in the rich and poor; in all things, because its origin, its end, its advantages, its form, and its matter are all holy. It is the nursery of Christianity, which supplies the earth with faithful souls, to complete the number of the elect in heaven; in a word, the preservation of marriage is of the highest importance to the commonwealth, for it is the origin and source of all its streams.

Would to God that his most beloved Son were invited to all marriages, as he was to that of Cana; then the wine of consolations and benedictions would never be wanting; for the reason why there is commonly a scarcity of it at the beginning is, because Adonis is invited instead of Jesus Christ, and Venus instead of his blessed Mother. He that would have his lambs fair and spotted as Jacob's were, must, like him, set fair

rods of divers colors before the sheep when they meet to couple; and he that would have a happy success in marriage ought in his espousals to represent to himself the sanctity and dignity of this sacrament. But, alas! instead of this there are a thousand disorders committed in diversions, feasting, and immodest discourse; it is not surprising, then, that the success of marriages should not correspond. Above all things, I exhort married people to that mutual love which the Holy Ghost so much recommends in the Scripture. O you that are married! I tell you not to love each other with a natural love, for it is thus that the turtles love; nor do I say, love one another with a human love, for the heathens do this; but I say to you, after the great Apostle, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church." Eph. v. And you, wives, love your husbands, as the Church loveth her Saviour. It was God that brought Eve to our first father, Adam, and gave her him in marriage; it is also God, O my friends! who, with his invisible hand, has tied the knot of the holy bond of your marriage, and given you to one another; why do you not, then, cherish each other with a holy, sacred, and divine love?

The first effect of this love is an indissoluble union of your hearts. Two pieces of fir glued together, if the glue be good, cleave so fast to each other that they can be more easily broken in any other place than that in which they were joined. But God joins the husband to the wife with his own blood; for which cause this union is so strong that the soul must sooner separate

from the body of the one or the other, than the husband from the wife. Now, this union is not understood principally of the body, but of the heart, of the affection, and of the love.

The second effect of this love ought to be the inviolable fidelity of one party to the other. Seals were anciently graven upon rings worn on the fingers, as the holy Scripture itself testifies. Behold, then, the mystery of this ceremony in marriage. The Church, which by the hand of the priest blesses a ring, and gives it first to the man, testifies that she puts a seal upon his heart by this sacrament, to the end that henceforward neither the name nor the love of any other woman may enter therein, so long as she shall live who has been given to him; afterward the bridegroom puts the ring on the hand of the bride, that she reciprocally may understand that her heart must never admit an affection to any other man, so long as he shall live upon earth whom our Lord here gives her for a husband.

The third fruit of marriage is the lawful production and education of children. It is a great honor to you that are married, that God, designing to multiply souls, which may bless and praise him to all eternity, makes you coöperate with him in so noble a work, by the production of the bodies, into which he infuses immortal souls, like heavenly drops, as he creates them.

Preserve, then, O husbands! a tender, constant, and cordial love for your wives; for the woman was taken from that side of the first man

which was nearest his heart, to the end she might be loved by him cordially and tenderly. The weaknesses and infirmities of your wives, whether in body or mind, ought never to provoke you to any kind of disdain, but rather to a mild and affectionate compassion; since God has created them such, to the end that, depending upon you, you should receive from them more honor and respect, and that you should have them in such manner for your companions, that nevertheless you should be their heads and superiors. And you, O wives! love tenderly and cordially the husbands whom God has given you, but with a respectful love, and full of reverence; for therefore did God create them of a sex more vigorous and predominant; and was pleased to ordain that the woman should depend upon the man, being bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and that she should be made of a rib taken from under his arm, to show that she ought to be under the hand and guidance of her husband. The holy Scripture, which strictly recommends to you this subjection, renders it also agreeable, not only by prescribing that you should accommodate yourselves to it with love, but also by commanding your husbands to exercise it over you with charity, tenderness, and complacency. "Husbands," says St. Peter, "dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the woman as to the weaker vessel." 1 Epist. iii. 7.

But while I exhort you to advance more and more in this mutual love, which you owe one

another, beware lest it degenerate into any kind of jealousy; for it often happens, that as the worm is bred in the apple which is the most delicate and ripe, so jealousy grows in that love of married people which is the most ardent and affectionate, of which, nevertheless, it spoils and corrupts the substance, breeding, by insensible degrees, strifes, dissensions, and divorces. But jealousy is never seen where the friendship is reciprocally grounded on solid virtue: it is, therefore, an infallible mark that the love is in some degree sensual and gross, and has met with a virtue imperfect, inconstant, and subject to distrust. Jealousy is an absurd means of proving the sincerity of friendship. It may, indeed, be a sign of the greatness of the friendship, but never of its goodness, purity, and perfection; since the perfection of friendship presupposes an assurance of the virtue of those whom we love, and jealousy presupposes a doubt of it.

If you desire, O husbands! that your wives should be faithful to you, give them a lesson by your example. "How," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "can you exact purity of your wives, when you yourselves live in impurity? How can you require of them that which you give them not? Do you wish them to be chaste? behave yourselves chastely towards them: and, as St. Paul says, 'let every man know how to possess his vessel in sanctification.' But if, on the contrary, you yourselves teach them not to be virtuous, it is not surprising if you are disgraced by their perdition. But you, O wives!

whose honor is inseparably joined with purity and modesty, be zealous to preserve this your glory, and suffer no kind of loose behavior to tarnish the whiteness of your reputation." Fear all kinds of assaults, how small soever they may be; never suffer any wanton addresses to approach you: whoever presumes to praise your beauty, or your general behavior, ought to be suspected; for he that praises the ware which he cannot buy is strongly tempted to steal it, but if to your praise he adds the dispraise of your husband, he offers you a heinous injury; for it is evident that he not only desires to ruin you, but accounts you already half lost, since the bargain is half made with the second merchant when one is disgusted with the first.

"Ladies formerly, as well as now, were accustomed to wear ear-rings of pearl, for the pleasure," says Pliny, "which they derive from hearing them jingle against each other." But for my part, as I know that the great friend of God, Isaac, sent ear-rings, as the first earnest of his love, to the chaste Rebecca, I believe that this mysterious ornament signifies that the first part which a husband should take possession of in his wife, and which his wife should faithfully keep for him, is her ears; in order that no other language or noise should enter there but only the sweet and amiable music of chaste and pure words, which are the oriental pearls of the gospel; for we must always remember that souls are poisoned by the ear, as the body is by the mouth.

Love and fidelity joined together always pro-

duce familiarity and confidence; and therefore the saints have used many reciprocal caresses in their marriage; caresses truly affectionate, but pure, tender, and sincere. Thus, Isaac and Rebecca, the most chaste married couple of antiquity, were seen through a window caressing one another in such manner that, though there was no immodesty, Abimelech was convinced that they could be no other than man and wife. The great St. Lewis, equally rigorous to his own flesh, and tender in the love of his wife, was almost blamed for the abundance of such caresses; though, indeed, he rather deserved praise for being able to bring his martial and courageous spirit to stoop to these little duties so requisite for the preservation of conjugal love; for, although these demonstrations of pure and free affection bind not the hearts, yet they tend to unite them, and serve for an agreeable disposition to mutual conversation.

St. Monica, being pregnant of the great St. Augustine, dedicated him by frequent oblations to the Christian religion, and to the service and glory of God, as he himself testifies, saying, that "he had already tasted the salt of God in his mother's womb." This is a great lesson for Christian women, to offer up to his divine Majesty the fruit of their wombs, even before they come into the world; for God, who accepts the offerings of an humble and willing heart, commonly at that time seconds the affections of mothers; witness Samuel, St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Andrew of Fiesola, and many others The

Mother of St. Bernard, a mother worthy of such a son, as soon as her children were born, took them in her arms, and offered them up to Jesus Christ; and, from that moment, she loved them with respect as things consecrated to God and entrusted by him to her care. This pious custom was so pleasing to God that her seven children became afterwards eminent for sanctity. But when children begin to have the use of reason, both their fathers and mothers ought to take great care to imprint the fear of God in their hearts. The devout queen Blanche performed this duty most fervently with regard to St. Lewis, her son. She often said to him, "I would much rather, my dear child, see you die before my eyes, than see you commit only one mortal sin." This caution remained so deeply engraved in his soul that, as he himself related, not one day of his life passed in which he did not remember it, and take all possible care to observe it faithfully. Families and generations are, in our language, called houses; and even the Hebrews called the generations of children the building up of a house; for, in this sense, it is said that God built houses for the midwives of Egypt. Now, this is to show that the raising of a house, or family, consists not in storing up a quantity of worldly possessions, but in the good education of children in the fear of God, and in virtue, in which no pains or labor ought to be spared; for children are the crown of their parents. Thus, St. Monica fought with so much fervor and constancy against the evil inclination

of her son St. Augustine, that, having followed him by sea and land, she made him more happily the child of her tears, by the conversion of his soul, than he had been of her blood, by the generation of his body.

St. Paul leaves to wives the care of the household concerns as their portion, for which reason many think with truth that their devotion is more profitable to the family than that of the husband, who, not residing so among the domestics, cannot of consequence so easily frame them to virtue. On this consideration Solomon, in his Proverbs, makes the happiness of the whole family depend on the care and industry of the valiant woman whom he describes.

It is said, in the book of Genesis, that Isaac, seeing his wife Rebecca barren, prayed to the Lord for her; or, according to the Hebrew, prayed to the Lord opposite to her, because the one prayed on the one side of the oratory, and the other on the other; and the prayer of the husband offered in this manner was heard. Such union as this of the husband and wife, in holy devotion, is the best and most fruitful of all; and to this they ought mutually to encourage and to engage each other. There are fruits, as, for example, the quince, which, on account of the bitterness of their juice, are not agreeable unless they are preserved with sugar; there are others, which, on account of their tenderness, cannot be long kept, unless they are preserved in like manner, such as cherries and apricots; thus, wives ought to wish that their husbands should be preserved with the sugar of devo-

tion; for a man without devotion is severe, harsh, and rough. And husbands ought to wish that their wives should be devout, because without devotion a woman is very frail, and liable to obscure, and perhaps to lose, her virtue. St. Paul says "that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband"; because, in this strict alliance of marriage, the one may easily draw the other to virtue; but what a blessing is it when the man and wife, being both believers, sanctify each other in the true fear of God!

As to the rest, their mutual bearing with each other ought to be so great that they should never be both angry with each other at the same time, so that a dissension or debate be never seen between them. Bees cannot stay in a place where there are echoes or rebounding of voices; nor can the Holy Ghost remain in a house in which there are reboundings of clamor, strife, and contradictions. St. Gregory Nazianzen tells us, that in his time married people made a feast on the anniversary day of their wedding. For my part, I should approve of the reviving of this custom, provided it were not attended with preparations of worldly and sensual recreations; but that the husband and wife should confess and communicate on that day, and recommend to God, with a more than ordinary fervor, the happy progress of their marriage; renewing their good purposes to sanctify it still more and more by mutual love and fidelity, and recovering breath, as it were, in our Lord, in

order to support with more ease the burdens of their calling.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

OF THE SANCTITY OF THE MARRIAGE BED.

THE marriage bed ought to be undefiled, as the Apostle says, Heb. xiii. 5; that is to say, exempt from uncleanness and all profane filthiness. Holy marriage was first instituted in the earthly paradise, where, as yet, there never had been any disorder of concupiscence, or of anything immodest. There is some resemblance between lustful pleasures and those that are taken in eating, for both of them have relation to the flesh, though the former, by reason of their brutal vehemence, are called simply carnal. I will, then, explain that which I cannot say of the one by that which I shall say of the other.

1. Eating is ordained for our preservation: as, then, eating, merely to nourish and preserve health, is a good, holy, and necessary thing; so, that which is requisite in marriage for bringing children into the world and multiplying mankind is a good thing and very holy, as it is the principal end of marriage.

2. As to eat, not for the preservation of life, but to keep up that mutual intercourse and condescension which we owe to each other, is a thing in itself both lawful and just: so the mutual and

lawful condescension of the parties united in holy marriage is called by St. Paul a debt of so obligatory a nature that he allows neither of the parties exemption from it, without the voluntary consent of the other, not even for the exercises of devotion, as I have already observed in the chapter on Holy Communion, p. 112. How much less, then, may either party be dispensed from it through a capricious pretence of virtue, or through anger or disdain?

3. As they that eat to maintain a mutual intercourse of friendship with others ought to eat freely, and endeavor to show an appetite to their meat; so the marriage debt should always be paid as faithfully and freely as if it were in hopes of having children, although on some occasions there might be no such expectation.

4. To eat for neither of these reasons, but merely to satisfy the appetite, may, indeed, be tolerated, but cannot be commended; for the mere pleasure of the sensual appetite cannot be a sufficient object to render an action commendable. To eat not merely for the gratification of the appetite, but also with excess and irregularity, is a thing more or less blamable as the excess is more or less considerable.

5. Now, excess in eating consists not only in eating too much, but also in the time and manner of eating. It is surprising, dear Philothea, that honey, which is so proper and wholesome a food for bees, may, nevertheless, become so hurtful to them as sometimes to make them sick: for in the spring, when they eat too much of it, being

overcharged with it in the forepart of their head and wings, they become sick, and frequently die. In like manner, nuptial commerce, which is so holy, just, and commendable in itself, and so profitable to the commonwealth, is, nevertheless, in certain cases dangerous to those that exercise it; for it frequently debilitates the soul with venial sin, as in cases of mere and simple excess; and sometimes it kills it effectually by mortal sin, as when the order appointed for the procreation of children is violated and perverted; in which case according as one departs more or less from it, the sins are more or less abominable, but always mortal: for the procreation of children being the principal end of marriage one may never lawfully depart from the order which that end requires; though, on account of some accident or circumstance, it cannot at that time be brought about, as it happens when barrenness, or pregnancy, prevents generation. In these occurrences corporal commerce may still be just and holy, provided the rules of generation be followed: no accident whatsoever being able to prejudice the law which the principal end of marriage has imposed. Certainly the infamous and the execrable action of Onan in his marriage was detestable in the sight of God, as the holy text of the 38th chapter of Genesis testifies: for although certain heretics of our days, much more blamable than the Cynics, of whom St. Jerome speaks in his commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, have been pleased to say it was the perverse intention only of that wicked man which displeased God, the Scripture positively

asserts the contrary, and assures us that the act itself which he committed was detestable and abominable in the sight of God.

It is a certain mark of a base and abject spirit to think of eating before meal time, and, still more, to amuse ourselves afterwards with the pleasure which we took in eating, keeping it alive in our words and imagination, and delighting in the recollection of the sensual satisfaction we had in swallowing down those morsels; as men do who before dinner have their minds fixed on the spit, and after dinner on the dishes; men worthy to be "scullions" of a kitchen, "who," as St. Paul says, "make a god of their belly." Persons of honor never think of eating but at sitting down at table, and after dinner wash their hands and their mouth, that they may neither retain the taste nor the scent of what they have been eating. The elephant, although a gross beast, is yet the most decent and most sensible of any other upon earth. I will give you a specimen of his chastity: although he never changes his female, and hath so tender a love for her whom he hath chosen, yet he never couples with her but at the end of every three years, and then only for the space of five days, but so privately that he is never seen in the act. On the sixth day afterwards, when he makes his appearance, the first thing he does is to go directly to some river, where he washes his body entirely, being unwilling to return to the herd till he is quite purified. May not these modest dispositions in such an animal serve as lessons to married people, not to keep their affections engaged in

those sensual and carnal pleasures which, according to their vocation, they have exercised; but when they are past to wash their heart and affection, and purify themselves from them as soon as possible, that afterwards, with freedom of mind, they may practise other actions more pure and elevated. In his advice consists the perfect practice of that excellent doctrine of St. Paul to the Corinthians. "The time is short," said he; "it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they have none." For, according to St. Gregory, that man has a wife as if he had none, who takes corporal satisfaction with her in such a manner as not to be diverted from spiritual exercises. Now, what is said of the husband is understood reciprocally of the wife. "Let those that use the world," says the same apostle, "be as though they used it not." Let every one, then, use this world according to his calling, but in such manner that, not engaging his affection in it, he may be as free and ready to serve God as if he used it not. "It is the great evil of man," says St. Austin, "to desire to enjoy the things which he should only use." We should enjoy spiritual things, and only use corporal, of which when the use is turned into enjoyment, our rational soul is also changed into a brutish and beastly soul. I think I have said all that I would say to make myself understood, without saying that which I would not say.

CHAPTER XL.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WIDOWS.

SAINT PAUL instructs all prelates in the person of Timothy, saying, "Honor widows that are widows indeed." 1 Tim. v. 3. Now, to be a widow indeed, the following conditions are required: —

1. That the widow be not only a widow in body, but in heart, also; that is, that she put on an inviolable resolution to keep herself in the state of a chaste widowhood; for those that are widows only till an opportunity presents itself of being married again are only separate from men as to the pleasures of the body, but are already joined to them according to the will of the heart. But, if she that is a widow indeed, in order to confirm herself in the state of widowhood, will offer her body and her chastity by vow to God, she will add a great ornament to her widowhood, and give a great security to her resolution. For since, after her vow, she has it no longer in her power to quit her chastity without quitting her title to heaven, she will be so jealous of her design that she will not suffer so much as the least thought of marriage to occupy her heart for a single moment; so that this sacred vow will serve as a strong barrier between her soul and every project contrary to her resolution. St. Augustine advises this vow very strenuously to the Christian widow; and the ancient and learned Origen goes much further, for he ex-

horts married women to vow and dedicate themselves to a chaste widowhood, in case their husband should die before them; in order that, amidst the sensual pleasures of marriage, they may also, by means of this anticipated promise, enjoy the merit of a chaste widowhood. A vow not only makes the good works done in consequence of it more acceptable to God, but also encourages us to put them in execution; it gives to God not only the good works, which are the fruits of our good will, but dedicates likewise to him the will itself, which is the tree of all our actions. By simple chastity we lend, as it were, our body to God, retaining notwithstanding a liberty to subject it another day to sensual pleasure; but by the vow of chastity we make him an absolute and irrevocable gift of our body, without reserving to ourselves any power of recalling it, and thus happily render ourselves slaves to him whose service is better than any kingdom. Now, as I highly approve the advice of these two great men, so I should wish that those souls which are so happy as to desire to follow it should do it prudently, piously, and solidly, having first well examined their resolutions, invoked the light and grace of heaven, and taken the counsel of some wise and devout director: by this means all will be done with more fruit.

2. Moreover, this renunciation of a second marriage must be made purely with the intention of turning all the affections of the soul towards God, and of uniting the heart entirely with that of his divine Majesty; for if the desire to leave her children rich, or any other worldly pretension, should

keep the widow in her state of widowhood, she may perhaps have praise for it, but certainly not before God; for in the eyes of God nothing can truly merit praise but that which is done for his sake.

3. Moreover, the widow, that would be a widow indeed, must voluntarily separate and restrain herself from profane satisfaction; "for she that liveth in pleasures is dead while she is living," says St. Paul, 1 Tim. v. 6. To desire to be a widow, and to be, nevertheless, pleased with being courted, flattered, and caressed; to be fond of balls, dancing, and feasting; to be perfumed, finely dressed, etc., is to be a widow, living as to the body, but dead as to the soul. What doth it signify, I pray you, whether the sign of the inn of Adonis, or of profane love, consist of white feathers, in the form of a plume, or of black crape, spread like a net around the face? Yea, the black is often put over the white to make it look more conspicuous and favorable to vanity; for the widow having made a trial of that fashion by which women can please men best casts the most dangerous baits before their minds. The widow, then, who lives in these fond delights is dead while she lives, and therefore, properly speaking, she is but an idol of widowhood.

"The time of pruning is come; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," says the canticle. All that would live devoutly must prune and cut away all worldly superfluities. But this is more particularly necessary for the true widow, who, like a chaste turtle, comes from weeping, bewailing,

and lamenting the loss of her husband. When Noemi returned from Moab to Bethlehem, the women of the town, who had known her when she was first married, said one to another, "Is not that Noemi?" Ruth i. 20. But she answered, "Call me not Noemi, I pray you, for Noemi signifies comely and beautiful; but call me Mara, for the Lord has filled my soul with bitterness"; this she said because she had lost her husband. Thus the devout widow never desires to be esteemed either beautiful or comely, contenting herself with being such as God desires her to be, that is to say, humble and abject in her own eyes.

Lamps in which aromatic oil is burnt emit a more sweet odor when their flame is extinguished; so widows whose love has been pure in their marriage send forth a more sweet perfume of virtue and chastity when their light, that is, their husband, is extinguished by death. To love the husband as long as he lives is an ordinary thing amongst women; but to love him so well that after his death she will hear of no other is a degree of love which appertains only to them that are widows indeed. To hope in God whilst the husband serves for a support is by no means unusual; but to hope in God when one is destitute of this support is worthy of great praise. Hence it is easy to know, in widowhood, the perfection of the virtues which a woman possessed during the life of her husband.

The widow who has children who stand in need of her guidance and support, principally in their spiritual concerns and their establishments in life,

ought not by any means to abandon them; for the apostle St. Paul says clearly that they are obliged to that care of their children to make the like return to their parents. 1 Tim. iii. And that they who have no solicitude for those that belong to them, and especially for their own family, are worse than infidels. But if the children be in such a state as to stand in no need of her guidance, then should the widow collect all her affections and thoughts, to apply them more purely to her own advancement in the love of God.

If some absolute necessity oblige not the conscience of the true widow to external troubles, such as suits in law, I counsel her to avoid them altogether, and to follow that method in managing her affairs which appears the most peaceable and quiet, although it may not seem the most advantageous. For the advantages to be reaped from worldly troubles must be very great to bear any comparison with the happiness of a holy tranquillity. Moreover, disputes and lawsuits distract the heart and often open a gate to the enemies of chastity, because the parties, in order to please those whose favor they stand in need of, do not hesitate to render themselves displeasing to God.

Let prayer be the widow's continual exercise; for as she ought now to love none but God, so she ought to speak to scarcely any but God. For as the iron, which, by the presence of the diamond, is hindered from following the attraction of the loadstone, springs towards it as soon as the diamond is removed; so the heart of the widow,

which could not well give itself up so entirely to God, nor follow the attractions of his divine love, during the life of her husband, ought immediately after his death to run ardently after the sweet odor of the heavenly perfumes, as if she said, in imitation of the heavenly Spouse: "O Lord! now that I am all my own, receive me that I may be all thine; draw me; we will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments."

The virtues proper for the exercise of a holy widow are perfect modesty, a renunciation of honors, ranks, assemblies, titles, and of all such varieties; serving the poor and the sick, comforting the afflicted, instructing girls in a devout life, and making themselves a perfect pattern of all virtues to young women: cleanliness and simplicity should be the ornaments of their dress; humility and charity the ornaments of their actions; courtesy and mildness the ornaments of their speech; modesty and purity the ornaments of their eyes; and Jesus Christ crucified the only love of their heart. In fine, the true widow is in the church a little violet of March, which sends forth an incomparable sweetness by the odor of her devotion, and almost always keeps herself concealed under the broad leaves of her abjection, since, by the obscurity of her attire, she testifies her mortification. She grows in cool and uncultivated places, not willing to be importuned with the conversation of worldlings, the better to preserve the coolness of her heart against all the heats which the desire of riches, of honors, or even of fond love, might bring upon her. "She shall be

blessed," says the holy apostle, "if she continue in this manner." 1 Cor. vii. 8.

I could say much more upon this subject; but it will suffice to advise the widow who is solicitous for the honor of her condition to read attentively the excellent epistles which the great St. Jerome wrote to Furia, Salvia, and all those other ladies who were so happy as to be the spiritual children of so great a father. Nothing can be added to his instructions except this admonition: that the true widow ought never to blame nor censure those who pass to a second, or even a third or a fourth marriage; for in some cases God so disposes of them for his greater glory; and that she must always have before her eyes this doctrine of the ancients, that neither widowhood nor virginity have any other place or rank in heaven but that which is assigned to them by humility.

CHAPTER XLI.

A WORD TO VIRGINS

O VIRGINS! I have only three words to say to you, for the rest you will find elsewhere. If you pretend to a temporal marriage, be careful to keep your first love for your first husband. In my opinion it is a great deceit to present, instead of an entire and sincere heart, a heart quite worn out, spoiled and tired with love. But if you have the

happiness to be called to the pure and virginal espousals of Christ, and you desire to preserve forever your virginity, O God! keep your love with all possible diligence for this divine Spouse, who, being purity itself, loves nothing so much as purity, and to whom are due the first fruits of all things, but principally those of our love. St. Jerome's epistles will furnish you with all advices necessary for you; and, as your condition obliges you to obedience, choose a guide under whose direction you may dedicate, in a more holy manner, your heart and body to his divine Majesty.

Part Fourth.

CONTAINING NECESSARY ADVICES AGAINST THE MOST ORDINARY TEMPTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THAT WE MUST DISREGARD THE CENSURES OF WORLDLINGS.

AS soon as the children of this world perceive that you desire to follow a devout life they will discharge arrows of mockery and detraction against you without number. The most malicious will attribute your change to hypocrisy, bigotry, and artifice. They will say that, being frowned upon and rejected by the world, you fly for refuge to God. Your friends will make a thousand remonstrances, which they imagine to be very wise and charitable. They will tell you that you will fall into some melancholy humor; that you will lose your credit in the world, and make yourself insupportable; you will grow old before your time; your domestic affairs will suffer; you must live in the world like one in the world; salvation may be had without so many mysteries; and a thousand similar impertinencies.

Dear Philothea! what is all this but foolish and empty babbling? These people are not in-

terested in your health or affairs. "If you had been of the world," says our blessed Saviour, "the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." St. John xv. 19. We have seen gentlemen and ladies pass the whole night, nay, many nights, together at chess or cards; and can there be any attention more absurd, stupid, or gloomy, than that of gamesters? And yet worldlings say not a word, nor do friends ever trouble themselves about them; but should they spend an hour in meditation, or rise in the morning a little earlier than ordinary to prepare themselves for communion, every one would run to the physician to cure them of hypochondriacal humors and vapors. These persons can pass thirty nights in dancing without experiencing any inconvenience; but for watching only one Christmas night every one coughs, and complains that he is sick the next morning. Who sees not that the world is an unjust judge, gracious and favorable to its own children, but harsh and rigorous towards the children of God?

We can never please the world unless we lose ourselves together with the world; it is so whimsical that it is impossible to satisfy it. "John came neither eating nor drinking," says our Saviour, "and you say he hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and you say: Behold a man that is a glutton, and a drinker of wine." St. Luke vii. 33. It is true, Philothea, that if, through condescension, we consent to laugh, play, or dance with the world, the

world will be scandalized at us; and if we do not it will accuse us of hypocrisy or melancholy. If we dress gayly, the world will say that we do so for some evil end; if we neglect our dress, it will impute it either to meanness or avarice. Our mirth will be termed dissoluteness, and our mortification sullenness; and as the world thus looks upon us with an evil eye, we can never be agreeable to it. It aggravates our imperfections, publishing them as sins; it makes our venial sins mortal, and our frailties sins of malice. Charity is benevolent and kind, says St. Paul, but the world is malicious; charity thinks no evil, whereas, the world, on the contrary, always thinks evil, and when it cannot condemn our actions it will accuse our intentions. So that whether the sheep have horns or not, whether they be white or black, the wolf will not hesitate to devour them, if he can.

Whatever we do, the world will wage war against us. If we remain long at confession, it will wonder how we can have so much to say; if we stay but a short time, it will say, we have not confessed all our sins. It will observe all our motions, and for one word of anger that we utter it will protest that our temper is insupportable; the care of our affairs will be called covetousness, and our meekness, folly. But as for the children of the world, their anger is called generosity; their avarice, economy; their familiarities, honorable entertainments: spiders always spoil the work of the bees.

Let us turn a deaf ear to this blind world.

Philothea; let it cry as long as it pleases, like an owl, to disturb the birds of the day. Let us be constant in our designs, and invariable in our resolutions. Our perseverance will demonstrate whether we have, in good earnest, sacrificed ourselves to God and dedicated ourselves to a devout life. Comets and planets appear to be almost of an equal light; but as comets are only certain fiery exhalations which pass away, and after a short time disappear, whereas planets remain in perpetual brightness; so hypocrisy and true virtue have a great resemblance in their external appearance, but they are easily distinguished from each other; because hypocrisy cannot long subsist, but is quickly dissipated like smoke, whereas true virtue is always firm and constant.

It contributes highly to the security of devotion, at the beginning, to suffer reproaches and calumny on its account, since we thus avoid the dangers of pride and vanity, which may be compared to the midwives of Egypt, who had been ordered by the cruel Pharaoh to kill the male children of the Israelites on the very day of their birth. As we are crucified to the world, the world ought to be crucified to us; since worldlings look upon us as foolish, let us regard them in the same light.

CHAPTER II.

THAT WE MUST ALWAYS HAVE GOOD COURAGE.

LIGHT, though it be beautiful and lovely to our eyes, nevertheless dazzles them after we have been long in the dark. Before we become familiar with the inhabitants of any country, no matter how courteous and gracious they may be, we find ourselves at a loss amongst them. It may probably happen, Philothea, that this general farewell, which you have bid to the follies and vanities of the world, may make some impressions of sadness and discouragement on your mind. If this should be the case, have a little patience, I pray, for these impressions will soon disappear. It is but a little strangeness, occasioned by novelty; when it shall have passed away you will feel ten thousand consolations.

It may perhaps be painful to you at first to renounce that praise which your vanities extorted from foolish worldlings; but would you, for the sake of this insignificant reward, forfeit that eternal glory with which God will assuredly recompense you? The vain amusements, in which you have hitherto employed your time, will again represent themselves to allure your heart, and invite it to return to them; but can you resolve to renounce eternal happiness for such deceitful fooleries? Believe me, if you persevere, you will quickly receive consolations, so delicious and agreeable

that they will force you to acknowledge that the world has nothing but gall in comparison of this honey, and that one day of devotion is preferable to a thousand years expended in all the pleasures that the world can afford.

But you see the mountain of Christian perfection is exceedingly high. O my God! you say, how shall I be able to ascend? Courage, Philothea! When the young bees begin to assume their form we call them nymphs; as yet they are unable to fly to the flowers, the mountains, or the neighboring hills, to gather honey; but, by continuing to feed on the honey which the old ones have prepared, their wings appear, and they acquire sufficient strength to fly and seek their food all over the country. It is true we are as yet but nymphs, or little bees, in devotion, and consequently unable to fly so high as to reach the top of Christian perfection; but yet, as our desires and resolutions begin to assume a form, and our wings begin to grow, we may reasonably hope that we shall one day become spiritual bees, and be able to fly; in the meantime let us feed upon the honey of the many good instructions which other devout persons have left us, and pray to God to give us wings like a dove, that we may not only be enabled to fly up, during the time of this present life, but also rest on the mountain of eternity in the life to come.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE NATURE OF TEMPTATIONS, AND OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEELING TEMPTATION AND CONSENTING TO IT.

IMAGINE to yourself, Philothea, a young princess, extremely beloved by her spouse, and that some wicked man, in order to defile her marriage bed, sends an infamous messenger to treat with her concerning his abominable design. *First*, the messenger proposes the intention of his master; *secondly*, the princess is pleased or displeased with the proposition; *thirdly*, she either consents or refuses. In the same manner, Satan, the world, and the flesh, seeing a soul espoused to the Son of God, send her temptations and suggestions, by which, 1. Sin is proposed to her; 2. She is either pleased or displeased with the proposal; 3. In fine, she either consents or refuses. Such are the three steps to ascend to iniquity: temptation, delectation, and consent. But though these three actions are not so manifest in all kinds of sins, yet are they palpably seen in those that are enormous.

Though the temptation to any sin whatsoever should last during life it could never render us disagreeable to the divine Majesty, provided that we were not pleased with it, and did not give our consent to it; the reason is, because we do not act, but suffer in temptation; and as in this we take no pleasure, so we cannot incur any guilt. St. Paul suffered a long time the temptations of the

flesh, and yet was so far from being displeasing to God on that account, that, on the contrary, God was glorified by his patient suffering. The blessed Angela de Fulgina suffered such cruel temptations of the flesh that she moves to compassion when she relates them. St. Francis and St. Bennet also suffered such violent temptations that, in order to overcome them, the one was obliged to cast himself naked on thorns, and the other into snow; yet they lost nothing of God's favor, but increased very much in grace.

You must, then, be courageous, Philothea, amidst temptations, and never think yourself overcome as long as they displease you, observing well this difference between feeling and consenting, viz., we may feel temptations, though they displease us; but we can never consent to them unless they please us, since to be pleased with them ordinarily serves as a step towards our consent. Let, then, the enemies of our salvation lay as many baits and allurements in our way as they please, let them stay always at the door of our heart in order to gain admittance, let them make as many proposals as they can; still, as long as we remain steadfast in our resolution to take no pleasure in the temptation, it is utterly impossible that we should offend God, any more than the prince of whom I spoke could be displeased with his spouse for the infamous message sent to her, if she took no pleasure whatever in it. Yet, in this case, there is this difference between her and the soul, that the princess, having heard of the wicked proposition, may, if she please, drive away the mes-

senger, and never suffer him to appear again in her presence; but it is not always in the power of the soul not to feel the temptation, though it be always in her power not to consent to it; and, therefore, no matter how long the temptation may last, it cannot hurt us as long as it is disagreeable to us.

But, with respect to the delectation which may follow the temptation, it must be observed that, as there are two parts in the soul, the inferior and the superior, and that the inferior does not always follow the superior, but acts for itself apart, it frequently happens that the inferior part takes delight in the temptation without the consent, nay, against the will of the superior. That is that war fare which the Apostle describes, Gal. v. 17, when he says that the flesh lusts against the spirit, and that there is a law of the members and a law of the spirit.

Have you never seen, Philothea, a large fire covered with ashes? Should one come ten or twelve hours after, in search of fire, he would find but little in the midst of the hearth, and even that would be found with difficulty; yet there it is, since there it is found, and with it he may kindle again the remainder of the coals that were dead. It is just so with charity, our spiritual life, in the midst of violent temptations; for the temptation, casting the delectation which accompanies it into the inferior part, covers the whole soul, as it were, with ashes, and reduces the love of God into a narrow compass; for it appears nowhere but in the midst of the heart, in the interior of the soul: and

even there it scarcely seems perceptible, and with much difficulty we find it; yet there it is in reality, since, notwithstanding all the trouble and disorder we feel in our soul and our body, we still retain a resolution never to consent to the temptation; and the delectation, which pleases the outward man, displeases the inward, so that, although it surrounds the will, yet it is not within it; by which we see that such delectation, being contrary to the will, can be no sin.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO GOOD EXAMPLES ON THIS SUBJECT.

AS it is so important that you should understand this matter perfectly, I will explain it more at large. A young man, as St. Jerome relates, being fastened down with bands of silk on a delicate, soft bed, was enticed by all sorts of filthy allurements by a lascivious woman, who was employed by the persecutors on purpose to stagger his constancy. Ah, must not his chaste soul have felt strange disorders? Must not his senses have been seized with delectation, and his imagination occupied by the presence of those voluptuous objects? Undoubtedly; yet among so many conflicts, in the midst of so terrible a storm of temptations, and the many lustful pleasures that surrounded him, he sufficiently testified that his heart was not van-

quished, and that his will gave no consent. Perceiving so general a rebellion against his will, and having now no part of his body at command but his tongue, he bit it off and spit it in the face of that filthy woman, who tormented his soul more cruelly by her lust than all the executioners could ever have done by the greatest torments; for the tyrant, despairing to conquer him by suffering, thought to overcome him by these pleasures.

The history of the conflict of St. Catharine of Sienna, on the like occasion, is very admirable. The wicked spirit had permission from God to assault the purity of this holy virgin with the greatest fury, yet so as not to be allowed to touch her. He presented, then, all kinds of impure suggestions to her heart; and, to move her the more, coming with his companions in form of men and women, he committed a thousand acts immodest in her presence adding most filthy words and invitations; and, although all these things were exterior, nevertheless, by means of the senses, they penetrated deep into the heart of the virgin, which, as she herself confessed, was even brimful of them; so that nothing remained in her except the pure, superior will, which was not shaken with this tempest of filthy carnal delectation. This temptation continued for a long time, till one day our Saviour, appearing to her, she said to him: "Where wert thou, my sweet Saviour, when my heart was full of so great darkness and uncleanness?" To which he answered: "I was within thy heart, my daughter."—"But how," replied she, "could you dwell in my heart, where there was so much impurity? Is it possible that

thou couldst dwell in so unclean a place?" To which our Lord replied: "Tell me, did these filthy thoughts of thy heart give thee pleasure or sadness, bitterness or delight?"—"The most extreme bitterness and sadness," said she. "Who was it, then," replied our Saviour, "that caused this great bitterness and sadness in thy heart but I, who remained concealed in the interior of thy soul? Believe me, daughter, had it not been for my presence these thoughts which surrounded thy will would have doubtless entered in, and with pleasure would have brought death to thy soul; but, being present, I infused this displeasure into thy heart, which enabled thee to reject the temptation as much as it could; but, not being able to do it as much as it desired, it conceived a greater displeasure and hatred both against the temptation and thyself; and thus these troubles have proved occasions of great merit to thee, and have served to increase thy strength and virtue."

Behold, Philothea, how this fire was covered with ashes, and how the temptation had even entered the heart, and surrounded the will which, assisted by our Saviour, held out to the last, making resistance by her aversion, displeasure, and detestation of the evil suggested, and constantly refusing her consent to the sin which besieged her on every side. Good God! how distressing must it be to a soul that loves God not to know whether he be within her or not, or whether the divine love, for which she fights, be altogether extinguished in her or not! But it is the perfection of heavenly love to make the lover

suffer and fight for love, not knowing whether he possesses that love for which, and by which, he fights.

CHAPTER V.

AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO A SOUL IN TEMPTATION.

THESE violent assaults and extraordinary temptations, Philothea are permitted by God against those souls only whom he desires to elevate to the highest degree of divine love; yet it does not follow that they shall afterwards attain it; for it has often happened that those who have been constant under these assaults have, for want of faithfully corresponding with the divine favor, been afterwards overcome by very small temptations. This I tell you, that, if you should happen hereafter to be assaulted by great temptations, you may know that God confers an extraordinary favor on you when he thus declares his will to make you great in his sight; and that, nevertheless, you must be always humble and fearful, not assuring yourself that you shall be able to overcome small temptations, after you have prevailed against great ones, by any other means than a constant fidelity to his divine Majesty.

Whatever temptations, then, may hereafter befall you, or with whatever delectation they may be accompanied, so long as your will refuses her

consent, not only to the temptation, but also to the delectation, give not yourself the least trouble, for God is not offended. As, when a man is so far gone in a fit as to show no sign of life, they lay their hand on his heart, and from the least palpitation they feel conclude that he is alive, and that by the application of some restorative he may again recover his strength and senses; so it sometimes happens that, through the violence of a temptation, our soul seems to have fallen into a fit, so as to have no longer any spiritual life or motion; but, if we desire to know how it is with her, let us lay our hand upon our heart, and consider whether our will still retains its spiritual motion, that is to say, whether it has done its duty in refusing to consent and to yield to the temptation and delectation; for, so long as this motion of refusal remains, we may rest assured that charity, the life of our soul, remains in us, and that Jesus Christ, our Saviour, although concealed, is there present; so that by means of the continued exercise of prayer, the sacraments, and a confidence in God, we shall again return to a strong, sound, and healthful spiritual life.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW TEMPTATION AND DELECTATION MAY BECOME SINFUL.

THE princess, of whom we spoke before, could not prevent the dishonorable proposal which was made to her, because, as was presupposed, it was made against her will; but had she, on the contrary, given it the least encouragement, or betrayed a willingness to give her affection to him that courted her, doubtless she would then have been guilty in the sight of God, and, however she might dissemble it, would certainly deserve both blame and punishment. Thus it sometimes happens that the temptation alone involves us in sin, because we ourselves are the cause of it. For example, I know that when I play, I fall easily into violent passions and blasphemy, and that gaming serves me as a temptation to those sins; I sin, therefore, as often as I play, and I am accountable for all the temptations which shall befall me. In like manner, if I know that certain conversations will expose me to the danger of falling into sin, and yet willingly expose myself to them, I am doubtless guilty of all the temptations I may meet with on such occasions.

When the delectation which proceeds from the temptation can be avoided, it is always a greater or less sin to admit it, in proportion as the pleasure we take, or the consent we give to

it, is of a longer or shorter duration. The young princess before alluded to would be highly blamable, if, after having heard the filthy proposal, she should take pleasure in it, and entertain her heart with satisfaction on so improper a subject: for, although she does not consent to the real execution of what is proposed to her, she consents, nevertheless, to the spiritual application of her heart to the evil, by the pleasure she takes in it, because it is always criminal to apply either the heart or the body to anything that is immodest; but the sin depends so much on the consent of the heart, that without it even the application of the body could not be a sin.

Wherefore, whenever you are tempted to any sin, consider whether you have not voluntarily given occasion to the temptation; for then the temptation itself puts you in a state of sin, on account of the danger to which you have exposed yourself; this is to be understood when you could conveniently have avoided the occasion, and foresaw, or ought to have foreseen, the approach of the temptation; but, if you have given no occasion to the temptation, it cannot by any means be imputed to you as a sin.

When the delectation which follows temptation might have been avoided, and yet has not, there is always some kind of sin, more or less considerable, according to the time you have dwelt upon it, or the pleasure you have taken in it. A woman who has given no occasion to her being courted, and yet takes pleasure therein, is, nevertheless, to be blamed, if the pleasure which she

takes originate in no other cause than the courtship. But, for example, if the gallant who sues for love should play excellently well upon the lute, and she should take pleasure, not in his courtship, but in the harmony and sweetness of his lute, this would be no sin; though she ought not to indulge this pleasure long, for fear that she should pass thence to a desire of being courted. In like manner, if any one should propose to me some ingenious stratagem, to take revenge of my enemy, and I should neither delight in, nor consent to, the proposed revenge, but only be pleased with the subtility of the artful invention; although it would be no sin, still I ought not to continue long amusing myself with this pleasure, for fear that by degrees I might be induced to take some delight in the revenge itself.

We are sometimes surprised by certain symptoms of pleasure, which immediately follow the temptation, before we are well aware of it. This at most can only be a light venial sin; but it becomes greater, if, after we have perceived the evil which has befallen us, we stop some time, through negligence, to determine whether we shall admit or reject that delectation; and the sin becomes still greater, if, after being sensible of the delectation, we dwell upon it, through downright negligence, without being determined to reject it; but when we voluntarily, and with full deliberation, resolve to consent to this delectation, this of itself is a great sin, if the object in which we take delight be also a great sin. It is a great crime in a woman to be willing to entertain dishonest

love, although she never designs to yield herself up really to her lovers.

CHAPTER VII.

REMEDIES AGAINST GREAT TEMPTATIONS.

AS soon as you perceive yourself tempted, follow the example of children when they see a wolf or a bear in the country; for they immediately run into the arms of their father or mother, or at least they call out to them for help or assistance. It is the remedy which our Lord has taught: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." St. Matt. xxvi. 41. If you find that the temptation, nevertheless, still continues, or even increases, run in spirit to embrace the holy cross, as if you saw our Saviour Jesus Christ crucified before you. Protest that you never will consent to the temptation, implore his assistance against it, and still refuse your consent as long as the temptation shall continue.

But, in making these protestations and refusals of consent, look not the temptation in the face, but look only on our Lord; for if you look at the temptation, especially while it is strong, it may shake your courage. Divert your thoughts to some good and pious reflections, for, when good thoughts occupy your heart, they will drive away every temptation and suggestion.

But the sovereign remedy against all temptations, whether great or small, is to lay open your heart, and communicate its suggestions, feelings, and affections to your director; for you must observe, that the first condition that the enemy of salvation makes with a soul which he desires to seduce is to keep silence; as those who intend to seduce maids, or married women, at the very first forbid them to communicate their proposals to their parents or husbands; whereas God, on the other hand, by his inspirations, requires that we should make them known to our superiors and directors.

If, after all this, the temptation should still continue to harass and persecute us, we have nothing to do on our part but to continue as resolute in our protestations never to consent to it; for as maids can never be married as long as they answer no, so the soul, no matter how long the temptation may last, can never sin as long as she says no.

Never dispute with your enemy, nor make him any reply but that with which our Saviour confounded him: "Begone, Satan, for it is written the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve." For as a chaste wife should never answer the wicked wretch that makes her a dishonorable proposal, but quit him abruptly, and at the same instant turn her heart towards her husband, and renew the promise of fidelity which she has made to him; so the devout soul, that sees herself assaulted by temptation, ought by no means to lose time in disputing, but with all sim-

plicity turn herself towards Jesus Christ her Spouse, and renew her protestation of fidelity to him, and her resolution to remain solely and entirely his forever.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT WE MUST RESIST SMALL TEMPTATIONS.

ALTHOUGH we must oppose great temptations with an invincible courage, and the victory we gain over them is extremely advantageous, it may happen, nevertheless, that we may profit more in resisting small ones, for as great temptations exceed in quality, so small ones exceed in quantity; wherefore the victory over them may be comparable to that which is gained over the greatest. Wolves and bears are certainly more dangerous than flies; yet the former neither give us so much trouble, nor exercise our patience so much, as the latter. It is easy to abstain from murder, but it is extremely difficult to restrain all the little sallies of passion, the occasions of which present themselves every moment. It is very easy for a man or a woman to refrain from adultery, but it is not as easy to refrain from glances of the eyes, from giving or receiving marks of love, or from uttering or listening to flattery. It is easy not to admit a rival with the husband or wife, as to the body, but not as to the heart; it is easy to refrain from

defiling the marriage bed, but it is difficult to refrain from everything that may be prejudicial to conjugal affection; it is easy not to steal other men's goods, but difficult not to covet them; it is easy not to bear false witness in judgment, but difficult to observe truth strictly on every occasion; it is easy to refrain from drunkenness, but difficult to observe perfect sobriety; it is easy to refrain from wishing another man's death, but difficult to refrain from desiring what may be inconvenient to him; it is easy to abstain from defaming him, but it is sometimes difficult to refrain from despising him. In a word, these small temptations of anger, suspicion, jealousy, envy, fond love, levity, vanity, insincerity, affectation, craftiness, and impure thoughts, are continually assaulting even those who are the most devout and resolute. We must, therefore, diligently prepare ourselves, my dear Philothea, for this warfare; and rest assured, that for as many victories as we shall gain over these trifling enemies, so many gems shall be added to the crown of glory which God is preparing for us in heaven. Wherefore I say, that being ever ready to fight courageously against great temptations, we must in the meantime diligently defend ourselves against those that seem small and inconsiderable.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT REMEDIES WE ARE TO APPLY TO SMALL TEMPTATIONS.

NOW as to these smaller temptations of vanity, suspicion, impatience, jealousy, envy, fond love, and such like trash, which, like flies and gnats, continually hover about us, and sometimes sting us on the legs, the hands, or the face; as it is impossible to be altogether freed from them, the best defence that we can make is not to give ourselves much trouble about them; for although they may tease us, yet they can never hurt us, so long as we continue firmly resolved to dedicate ourselves in earnest to the service of God.

Despise, then, these petty assaults, without so much as thinking of what they suggest. Let them buzz and hover here and there around you; pay no more attention to them than you would to flies; but when they offer to sting you, and you perceive them in the least to light upon your heart, content yourself with quietly removing them, not by contending or disputing with them, but by performing some actions of a contrary nature to the temptation, especially acts of the love of God. But you must not persevere, Philothea, in opposing to the temptation the act of the contrary virtue, for this would be to dispute with it; but, after having performed a simple act of the contrary virtue, if you have had leisure to observe the quality of the tempta-

tion, turn your heart gently towards Jesus Christ crucified, and by an act of love kiss his sacred feet. This is the best means to overcome the enemy, as well in small as in great temptations; for as the love of God contains within itself the perfection of all the virtues, and is even more excellent than the virtues themselves, so it is also the sovereign antidote against every kind of vice; and, by accustoming your mind on these occasions to have recourse to this remedy, you need not even examine by what kind of temptation it is troubled. Moreover, this grand remedy is so terrible to the enemy of our souls, that as soon as he perceives that his temptation incites us to form acts of divine love he ceases to tempt us. Let these general principles suffice with respect to small and ordinary temptations; he who would wish to contend with them in particular would give himself much trouble to little or no purpose.

CHAPTER X.

HOW TO FORTIFY OUR HEARTS AGAINST TEMPTATIONS.

CONSIDER from time to time what passions are most predominant in your soul; and, having discovered them, adopt such a method of thinking, speaking, and acting, as may contradict them. If, for example, you find yourself inclined to vanity, think often on the miseries of human

life; think of the inquietude which these vanities will raise in your conscience at the day of your death; how unworthy they are of a generous heart, and that they are nothing but empty toys, fit only for the amusement of children. Speak often against vanity, and, whatever repugnance you may feel, cease not to cry it down, for by this means you will engage yourself, even in honor, to the opposite side; for by declaiming against a thing we bring ourselves to hate it, though at first we might have had an affection for it. Exercise works of abjection and humility as much as possible, though with ever so great a reluctance; since by this means you accustom yourself to humility, and weaken your vanity; so that, when the temptation comes, you will have less inclination to consent to it, and more strength to resist it.

If you are inclined to covetousness, think frequently on the folly of a sin which makes us slaves to that which was only made to serve us, and that at death we must part with all, and leave it in the hands of those who perhaps may squander it away, or to whom it may be a cause of damnation. Speak loud against avarice, and in praise of an utter contempt of the world. Force yourself to give frequent alms, and neglect to improve some opportunities of gain. Should you be inclined to give or receive fond love, often think how very dangerous this kind of amusement is, as well to yourself as others; how unworthy a thing it is, to employ in an idle pastime the noblest affection of our soul, and how worthy of censure

is so extreme a levity of mind. Speak often in praise of purity and simplicity of heart, and let your actions, to the utmost of your power, be ever conformable to your words, by avoiding levities and fond liberties. In short, in time of peace, that is, when temptations to the sin to which you are most inclined do not molest you, make several acts of the contrary virtue; and, if occasions of practising it do not present themselves, endeavor to seek them; for by this means you will strengthen your heart against future temptations.

CHAPTER XI.

OF INQUIETUDE.

AS inquietude is not only a temptation, but the source of many temptations, it is therefore necessary that I should say something concerning it. Inquietude, or sadness, then, is nothing else but that grief of mind which we conceive for some evil which we experience against our will, whether it be exterior, as poverty, sickness, contempt; or interior, as ignorance, avidity, repugnance, and temptation. When the soul, then, perceives that some evil has befallen her, she becomes sad, is displeased, and extremely anxious to rid herself of it; and thus far she is right, for every one naturally desires to embrace good, and fly from that which he apprehends to be evil. If

the soul, for the love of God, wishes to be freed from her evil, she will seek the means of her deliverance with patience, meekness, humility, and tranquillity, expecting it more from the providence of God than from her own industry or diligence. But if she seeks her deliverance, from a motive of self-love, then will she fatigue herself in quest of these means, as if the success depended more on herself than on God: I do not say that she thinks so, but that she acts as if she thought so. Now, if she succeeds not immediately according to her wishes, she falls into inquietude, which, instead of removing, aggravates the evil, and involves her in such anguish and distress, with so great loss of courage and strength, that she imagines her evil incurable. Thus, then, sadness, which in the beginning is just, produces inquietude, and inquietude produces an increase of sadness, which is extremely dangerous.

Inquietude is the greatest evil that can befall the soul, sin only excepted. For, as the seditious and intestine commotions of any commonwealth prevent it from being able to resist a foreign invasion, so our heart, being troubled within itself, loses the strength necessary to maintain the virtue it had acquired, and the means to resist the temptations of the enemy, who then uses his utmost efforts to fish, as it is said, in troubled waters.

Inquietude proceeds from an inordinate desire of being delivered from the evil which we feel, or of acquiring the good which we desire: and yet there is nothing which tends more to increase evil, and to prevent the enjoyment of good, than an un-

quiet mind. Birds remain prisoners in the nets, because, when they find themselves caught, they eagerly flutter about to extricate themselves, and by that means entangle themselves the more. Whenever, then, you are pressed with a desire to be freed from some evil, or to obtain some good, be careful both to settle your mind in repose and tranquillity, and to compose your judgment and will; and then gently procure the accomplishment of your desire, taking in regular order the means which may be most convenient; when I say gently, I do not mean negligently, but without hurry, trouble, or inquietude; otherwise, instead of obtaining the effect of your desire, you will mar all, and embarrass yourself the more.

"My soul is continually in my hands, O Lord, and I have not forgotten thy law," said David. Ps. cxviii. 109. Examine frequently in the day, or at least in the morning and evening, whether you have your soul in your hands, or whether some passion or inquietude has not robbed you of it. Consider whether you have your heart at command, or whether it has not escaped out of your hands, to engage itself to some disorderly affection of love, hatred, envy, covetousness, fear, uneasiness, or joy. If it should be gone astray, seek after it before you do anything else, and bring it back quietly to the presence of God, subjecting all your affections and desires to the obedience and directions of his divine will. For as they who are afraid of losing anything which is precious hold it fast in their hands; so, in imitation of this great king, we should always say, "O my God! my

soul is in danger, and therefore I carry it always in my hands; and in this manner I have not forgotten thy holy law."

Permit not your desires, how trivial soever they may be, to disquiet you, lest afterwards those that are of greater importance should find your heart involved in trouble and disorder. When you perceive that inquietude begins to affect your mind recommend yourself to God, and resolve to do nothing until it is restored to tranquillity, unless it should be something that cannot be deferred; in that case, moderating the current of your desires as much as possible, perform the action, not according to your desire but your reason.

If you can disclose the cause of your disquietude to your spiritual director, or at least to some faithful and devout friend, be assured that you will presently find ease; for communicating the grief of the heart produces the same effect on the soul as bleeding does in the body of him that is in a continual fever; it is the remedy of remedies. Accordingly the holy king St. Lewis gave this counsel to his son: "If thou hast any uneasiness in thy heart, tell it immediately to thy confessor, or to some good person, and then thou shalt be enabled to bear thy evil very easily, by the comfort he will give thee."

CHAPTER XII

OF SADNESS.

"THE sadness that is according to God," says St. Paul, "worketh penance steadfast unto salvation," 2 Cor. vii.; "but the sadness of the world worketh death." Sadness, then, may be good or evil, according to its different effects. It is true it produces more evil effects than good, for it has only two that are good, compassion and repentance; but it has six that are evil, viz., anxiety, sloth, indignation, jealousy, envy, and impatience, which caused the wise man to say, "sadness kills many, and there is no profit in it," Ecclus. xxx. 25: because, for two good streams which flow from the source of sadness, there are six very evil.

The enemy makes use of sadness and temptation against the just; for, as he endeavors to make the wicked to rejoice in their sins, so he strives to make the good grieve in their good works; and as he cannot procure the commission of evils but by making it appear agreeable, so he cannot divert us from good but by making it appear disagreeable. The prince of darkness is pleased with sadness and melancholy, because he is and will be sad and melancholy to all eternity; therefore he desires that every one should be like himself.

The sadness which is evil troubles and perplexes the soul, excites inordinate fears, creates a disgust for prayer, stupefies and oppresses the brain,

deprives the mind of counsel, resolution, judgment, and courage, and destroys her strength. In a word, it is like a severe winter, which demolishes all the beauty of the country, and devours every living creature; for it takes away all sweetness from the soul, and renders her disabled in all her faculties. If you should at any time be seized with the evil of sadness, Philothea, apply the following remedies.

"Is any one sad," says St. James v. 13, "let him pray." Prayer is a sovereign remedy, for it lifts up the soul to God, our only joy and consolation. But, in praying, let your words and affections, whether interior or exterior, always tend to a lively confidence in the divine goodness, such as, "O God of mercy! O infinite goodness! O my sweet Saviour! O God of my heart, my joy and my hope! O my divine Spouse, the well-beloved of my soul!" etc.

Oppose vigorously the least inclination to sadness, and, although it may seem that all your actions are at that time performed with tepidity and sloth, you must, nevertheless, persevere; for the enemy, who seeks by sadness to make us weary of good works, seeing that we cease not on that account to perform them, and that, being performed in spite of his opposition, they become more meritorious, will cease to trouble us any longer.

Sing spiritual canticles, for the devil by this means has often desisted from his operations: witness the evil spirit with which Saul was afflicted, whose violence was repressed by such music. It is also necessarily serviceable to employ ourselves

in exterior works, and to vary them as much as possible, in order to divert the soul from the melancholy object, and to purify and warm the spirits, sadness being a passion of a cold and dry complexion.

Perform external actions of fervor, although you may perform them without the least relish; such as embracing the crucifix, clasping it to your breast, kissing the feet and the hands, lifting up your eyes and your hands to heaven, raising your voice to God by words of love and confidence like these: "My beloved is mine, and I am his. My beloved is to me a posy of myrrh, he shall dwell between my breasts. My eyes have fainted after thee, O my God!" Say also: "When wilt thou comfort me? O Jesus, be thou a Jesus to me! Live, sweet Jesus, and my soul shall live! Who shall ever separate me from the love of God?" etc.

The moderate use of the discipline is also good against sadness, because this voluntary exterior affliction begets interior consolation, and the soul, feeling pain without, diverts herself from the pains which are within. But frequently the holy communion is the best remedy, because this heavenly bread strengthens the heart, and rejoices the spirit.

Disclose to your confessor, with humility and sincerity, all the feelings, affections, and suggestions which proceed from your sadness. Seek the conversation of spiritual persons, and frequent their company as much as you can. In a word, resign yourself into the hands of God, preparing yourself to suffer this troublesome sadness with

patience, as a just punishment of your vain joys; and doubt not but that God, after he has tried you, will deliver you from this evil.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF SPIRITUAL AND SENSIBLE CONSOLATIONS, AND HOW WE MUST BEHAVE OURSELVES IN THEM.

GOD continues the existence of this great world in a perpetual vicissitude, by which the day is always succeeded by the night, the spring by the summer, the summer by the autumn, the autumn by the winter, and the winter again by the spring. One day seldom perfectly resembles another: some are cloudy, some rainy, some dry; others windy, — a variety which adds considerably to the beauty of the universe. It is the same with man, who, according to the saying of the ancients, is an epitome of the universe, or another little world; for he never remains long in the same state; his life flows away upon the earth, like the waters, floating and undulating in a perpetual diversity of motion, which sometimes lift him up with hope, and sometimes bring him down with fear; sometimes carry him to the right hand by consolation, sometimes to the left by affliction; and not one of his days, no, not even one of his hours, is in every respect like another.

Now, it is necessary that we should endeavor to preserve an inviolable equality of heart amidst so great an inequality of occurrences, and that, although all things turn and change around us, we should remain constantly immovable; ever looking and aspiring towards God. No matter what course the ship may take; no matter whether it sails towards the east, west, north, or south; no matter by what wind it may be driven, — never will the needle of the compass point in any other direction than towards the fair polar star. Let everything be in confusion, not only around us, but even within us; let our soul be overwhelmed with sorrow or joy; with sweetness or bitterness; with peace or trouble; with light or darkness; with temptation or repose; with pleasure or disgust; with dryness or tenderness; whether it be scorched by the sun or refreshed by the dew; yet the point of our heart, our spirit and our superior will, which is our compass, must incessantly tend towards the love of God, its Creator, its Saviour, in a word, its only sovereign good. "Whether we live," says the Apostle, "we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord." And "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" No, nothing shall separate us from this love; neither tribulation, nor anguish, nor death, nor life, nor present grief, nor the fear of future accidents, nor the artifices of evil spirits, nor the height of consolations, nor the depth of afflictions, nor tenderness, nor dryness, ought ever to separate us from this holy charity which is founded in Jesus Christ.

This first absolute resolution, never to forsake God, nor to abandon his divine love, serves as a counterpoise to our souls, to keep them in a holy equilibrium, amidst the inequality of the several motions attached to the condition of this life; for as little bees, surprised by a storm in the fields, embrace small stones, that they may be able to balance themselves in the air, and not be so easily carried away by the wind; so our soul, having by resolution strongly embraced the precious love of God, continues constant in the midst of the inconstancy and vicissitude of consolations and afflictions, whether spiritual or temporal, exterior or interior. But, besides this general doctrine, we have need of some particular instructions.

1. I say, then, that devotion does not always consist in that sweetness, delight, consolation, or sensible tenderness of heart, which moves us to tears, and causes us to find satisfaction in some spiritual exercises. No, dear Philothea; for there are many souls who experience these tendernesses and consolations, and who, nevertheless, are very vicious, and consequently have not a true love of God, much less true devotion. Saul, pursuing David, who was fleeing before him in the wilderness of Engaddi, entered alone into a cavern, in which David and his people lay concealed. David, who on this occasion had many opportunities of killing him, spared his life, and would not even put him in bodily fear; but, having suffered him to go out at his pleasure, called after him to prove to him his innocence, and to convince him that he had been at his

mercy. Now, upon this occasion, what did not Saul do, to show that his rage against David was appeased? He called him his child, he wept aloud, he praised him, he acknowledged his goodness, he prayed to God for him, he foretold his future greatness, and he recommended to him his posterity. What greater display could he make of sweetness and tenderness of heart? Nevertheless his heart was not changed; neither did he cease to persecute David as cruelly as before. In like manner there are some persons, who, considering the goodness of God, and the passion of our Saviour, are tenderly affected. They sigh, weep, pray, and give thanks, in so feeling a manner that we imagine that they have acquired an extraordinary degree of devotion; but, when the moment of trial arrives, we see, that as the passing showers of a hot summer, which fall in large drops on the earth, but do not sink into it, serve for nothing but to produce mushrooms, so these tender tears, falling on a vicious heart, and not penetrating it, are altogether unprofitable; for, notwithstanding all this apparent devotion, these tender souls will not part with a farthing of the ill-gotten riches they possess; nor renounce one of their perverse affections; nor suffer the least temporal inconvenience for the service of our Saviour, over whose sufferings they have just been weeping; so that the good affections which they had were no better than spiritual mushrooms, and their devotion a mere delusion of the enemy, who amuses souls with these false consolations, to make them rest contented, lest they

should search any farther after the true and solid devotion, which consists in a constant, resolute, prompt, and active will to reduce to practice whatever we know to be pleasing to God. A child will weep tenderly when he sees his mother bled with a lancet; but if his mother, for whom he is weeping, would at the same time demand the apple or the sugar-plums which he had in his hand, he would by no means part with them; such is the nature of our tender devotion, when, contemplating the stroke of the lancet which pierced the heart of Jesus Christ crucified, we weep bitterly. Alas, Philothea! it is well to lament the painful death and passion of our Blessed Redeemer; but why, then, do we not give him the apple which we have in our hands, for which he so earnestly asks? why do we not give him our heart, the only token of love which our dear Saviour requires of us? why do we not resign to him so many petty affections, delights, and complacencies, which he wants to pluck out of our hands but cannot, because we feel more affection for these trifles than his heavenly grace? Ah, Philothea! these are the friendships of little children; tender, indeed, but weak, capricious, and of no effect. Devotion, then, consists not in these sensible affections, which sometimes proceed from a soft nature, susceptible of any impression we may wish to give it; sometimes from the enemy, who, to amuse us, stirs up our imagination to conceive these effects.

2. Yet these tender and delightful affections are sometimes good and profitable, for they excite the affections of the soul, strengthen the spirit, and add

to the promptitude of devotion a holy cheerfulness, which makes our actions lovely and agreeable even in the exterior. This relish which we find in the things of God is that which made David exclaim: "O Lord, how sweet are thy words to my palate! more than honey to my mouth." Doubtless the least consolation of devotion that we receive is in every respect preferable to the most agreeable recreations of the world. The breasts of the heavenly Spouse are sweeter to the soul than the wine of the most delicious pleasures on earth. He that has once tasted this sweetness esteems all other consolations no better than gall and wormwood. There is a certain herb, the taste of which is said to impart such sweetness as to prevent hunger and thirst; so they to whom God has given the heavenly manna can neither desire nor relish the consolations of the world, so far at least as to fix their affections on them; they are little foretastes of those immortal delights which God has in reserve for the souls that seek him; they are little delicacies which he gives to his children to allure them; they are the cordials with which he strengthens them, and they are also sometimes the earnest of eternal felicity. It is said that Alexander the Great, sailing on the ocean, discovered Arabia Felix, by perceiving the fragrant odors which the wind bore thence, and thereupon encouraged both himself and his companions; so we oftentimes receive these sweet consolations in this sea of our mortal life, which doubtless must give us a certain foretaste of the delights of that heavenly country to which we tend and aspire.

3. But you will perhaps say, since there are sensible consolations which are good, because they come from God; and others unprofitable, dangerous, and even pernicious, that proceed either from nature, or from the enemy, — how shall I be able to distinguish the one from the other, or know those that are evil or unprofitable, from those that are good? It is a general doctrine, dear Philothea, with regard to the affections and passions of our souls, that we must know them by their fruits. Our hearts are the trees, the affections and passions are the branches, and their words and actions are the fruit. That heart is good which has good affections, and those affections and passions are good which produce in us good effects and holy actions. If this sweetness, tenderness, and consolation make us more humble, patient, tractable, charitable, and compassionate towards our neighbor; more fervent in mortifying our concupiscences and evil inclinations; more constant in our exercises; more pliant and submissive to those whom we ought to obey; more sincere and upright in our lives,— then, doubtless, Philothea, they proceed from God. But if these consolations have no sweetness but for ourselves; if they make us curious, harsh, quarrelsome, impatient, obstinate, haughty, presumptuous, and rigorous towards our neighbor, when we already imagine ourselves to be saints, and disdain to be any longer subject to direction or correction, they are then, beyond all doubt, false and pernicious; for a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit.

4. Whenever we experience these consolations

we must humble ourselves exceedingly before God, and beware of saying, "Oh, how good am I!" No, Philothea, these considerations, as I have already said, cannot make us better; devotion does not consist in them; but let us say: "Oh, how good is God to such as hope in him, to the soul that seeks him!" 1. As the bare perception of something sweet cannot be said to render the palate itself sweet; so although this principal sweetness be excellent, and though God who gives it is sovereignly good, yet it follows not that he who receives it is also good. 2. Let us acknowledge that we are as yet but little children, who have need of milk, and that these dainties are given to us because our tender and delicate spirit stands in need of some allurement to entice us to the love of God. 3. Let us afterwards humbly accept these extraordinary graces and favors, and esteem them, not so much on account of their excellence, as because it is the hand of God which puts them into our hearts, as a mother would do, who, the more to please her child, puts the dainties into his mouth with her own hand, one by one; for if the child has understanding he sets a greater value on the tenderness of his mother than the delicious morsels which he receives; and thus, Philothea, it is a great matter to taste the sweetness of sensible consolations, but it is infinitely more sweet to consider that it is his most loving and tender hand that puts them, as it were, into our mouth, our heart, our soul, and our spirit. 4. Having thus humbly received them, let us carefully employ them according to the intention of the donor. Now, to what

end, think you, does God give us these sweet consolations? To make us sweet towards every one, and excite us to love him. The mother gives little presents to her child to induce him to embrace her; let us, then, embrace our blessed Saviour, who grants us these favors. But to embrace him is to obey him, to keep his commandments, do his will, and follow his desires, with a tender obedience and fidelity. Whenever, therefore, we receive any spiritual consolation, we must be more diligent in doing good, and in humbling ourselves. 5. Besides all this we must, from time to time, renounce those sweet and tender consolations, by withdrawing our heart from them, and protesting that, although we humbly accept them and love them because God sends them, and that they excite us to his love, yet it is not these we seek, but God himself, and his holy love; not the consolations, but the comforter; not their deliciousness, but the sweet Saviour; not their tenderness, but him that is the delight of heaven and earth. It is in this manner we ought to dispose ourselves to persevere in the holy love of God, although throughout our whole life we were never to meet with any consolation, and be ready to say, as well upon Calvary as upon Thabor: "Lord! it is good for me to be with thee, whether thou be upon the cross, or in thy glory." 6. To conclude, I admonish you, that should you experience any great abundance of such consolations, tenderness, tears, sweetness, etc., you must confer faithfully with your spiritual director, that you may learn how to moderate and behave yourself under them, for it is written. "Thou has found

honey, eat what is sufficient for thee." Prov. xxv. 16.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF SPIRITUAL DRYNESS.

AS long as consolation may last, do as I have just now directed you, dear Philothea! But this fine and agreeable weather will not always continue, for sometimes you shall find yourself so absolutely destitute of all feeling of devotion that your soul shall seem to be a wild, fruitless, barren desert, in which there is no trace of a pathway to find her God, nor any water of grace to refresh her, on account of the dryness which seems to threaten her with a total and absolute desolation. Alas! how much does a poor soul in such a state deserve compassion; but especially when the evil is vehement; for then, in imitation of David, she feeds herself with tears night and day; while the enemy, to cast her into despair, mocks her by a thousand suggestions of despondency, saying: "Ah! poor wretch, where is thy God? By what path shalt thou be able to find him? Who can ever restore to thee the joy of his holy grace?"

What shall you then do, Philothea? Examine the source whence this evil has flowed to you; for we ourselves are often the cause of our spiritual dryness. 1. As a mother refuses to gratify the appetite of her child, when such gratification might

increase its indisposition, so God withholds consolations from us, when we take a vain complacency in them, and are subject to the spiritual maladies of self-conceit and presumption. "It is good for me that thou hast humbled me"; yes, "for before I was humbled I offended." Ps. cxviii. 2. When we neglect to gather the sweetness and delights of the love of God at the proper season, he removes them from us in punishment of our sloth. The Israelite, who neglected to gather the manna betimes, could gather none after sunrise, for it had then all melted. 3. We are sometimes pleased in the bed of sensual consolations, as the sacred Spouse was in the Canticles; the Spouse of our soul comes and knocks at the door of our heart, and invites us to return to our spiritual exercises; but we put them off, because we are unwilling to quit these vain amusements, and false satisfactions; for this reason he departs, and permits us to slumber. But afterwards, when we desire to seek him, it is with great difficulty that we find him; and it is no more than what we have justly deserved, since we have been so unfaithful and disloyal as to refuse the participation of his love, to enjoy the consolations of the world. Ah! if you still keep the flour of Egypt, you shall not have the manna of heaven. Bees detest artificial odors; and the sweetness of the Holy Spirit is incompatible with the counterfeit delights of the world.

4. The double-dealing and subtlety which we use in our spiritual communications with our director may also produce spiritual dryness; for, since you lie to the Holy Ghost, it is no wonder he

should refuse his consolations. If you will not be as sincere and plain as a little child, you shall not, then, have the sugar-plums of little children.

5. If you have glutted yourself with worldly pleasures it is no wonder that you should find an unsavory taste in spiritual delights. When birds have once satiated their appetite the most delicious berries appear to them distasteful. "He hath filled the hungry with good things," says our blessed Lady. Luke ii. 33. "And the rich he hath sent away empty." They that are glutted with the pleasures of the world are not capable of the delights of the Spirit.

6. If you have been careful to preserve the fruits of the consolations which you have received, you shall receive new ones; for, to him that has, more shall be given; but he that has not kept, but lost, what was given him, through his own fault, shall never receive those graces which had been prepared for him. Rain enlivens green plants, but it destroys those that have lost their verdure.

There are several causes which occasion our fall from the consolations of devotion into dryness and barrenness of spirit. Let us, then, examine whether we can find any of them in ourselves; but observe, Philothea, that this examination is not to be made either with inquietude or too much curiosity; but if, after having faithfully considered our comportment, we find the cause of the evil to originate in ourselves, let us thank God for the discovery; for the evil is half cured when the cause of it is known; but if, on the contrary, you

can find nothing in particular which may seem to have occasioned this dryness, trouble not yourself about making any further inquiry, but with all simplicity do as I shall now advise you.

1. Humble yourself very much before God, by acknowledging your own nothingness and misery. Alas! O Lord, what am I when left to myself but a dry, parched soil, which, far from receiving those showers, of which it stands in so so great need, is exposed to the wind, and thus reduced to dust. 2. Call upon God, and beg comfort of him. "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me." Away, thou barren north wind, that witherest my soul; and blow, gentle gale of consolations, upon the garden of my heart, that its good affections may diffuse the odor of sweetness. 3. Go to your confessor, and opening to him the several plaits and folds of your soul, follow his advice with the utmost simplicity and humility; for God, who is well pleased with obedience, frequently renders the counsels we take from others, but especially from those who are the guides of our soul, profitable, when otherwise there might be no great appearance of success; as he imparted healing qualities to the waters of Jordan, the use of which Eliseus had, without any appearance of human reason, prescribed to Naaman. 4 Kings v. 14. 4. But, after all this, there is nothing so profitable, so fruitful, in a state of spiritual dryness, as not to suffer our affections to be too strongly fixed upon the desire of being delivered from it. I do not say that we ought

not simply to wish for a deliverance, but that we should not set our heart upon it; but rather yield ourselves up to the pure mercy and special providence of God, that he may make use of us to serve him as long as he pleases. In the midst of these thorns and deserts let us say, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me"; but let us also add, courageously, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." But here let us stop with as much tranquillity as possible; for God, beholding this holy indifference, will comfort us with many graces and favors; as was the case with Abraham when he resolved to deprive himself of his son Isaac. God, who contented himself with seeing him in this disposition of a pure resignation, comforted him with a most delightful vision, accompanied by the most consolatory benedictions. We ought, then, under all kinds of afflictions, whether corporal or spiritual, and amidst all the distractions or subtractions of sensible devotion which may happen to us, to say from the bottom of our heart, with profound submission, Job i. 21, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." For, if we continue in this humility, he will restore us his delightful favors as he did to Job, who constantly used the like words in his desolations.

Finally, Philothea, in the midst of our spiritual dryness, let us never lose courage, but wait with patience for the return of consolation. Let us not omit any of our exercises of devotion, but, if possible, let us multiply our good works; and, not being able to present to our dear Spouse the

most exquisite dishes, let us offer him such as we can procure; for he is indifferent, provided the heart which offers them be perfectly fixed in the resolution of loving him. When the spring is fair the bees make more honey, and produce fewer young ones; for, when the fine weather favors them, they are so busy in their harvest among the flowers that they forget the production of their young; but when the spring is sharp and cloudy they produce more young ones, and less honey; for, not being able to go abroad to gather honey, they employ themselves at home to increase and multiply their race. Thus it happens frequently, Philothea, that the soul, finding herself in the fair spring of spiritual consolations, amuses herself so much in enjoying their sweetness, that in the abundance of these delights she produces fewer good works; whilst, on the contrary, in the midst of spiritual dryness, the more destitute she finds herself of the consolations of devotion, the more she multiplies her good works, and abounds in the interior generation of the virtues of patience, humility, self-contempt, resignation, and renunciation of self-love.

Many persons, especially women, falsely imagine that the spiritual exercises which they perform without relish, tenderness of heart, or sensible satisfaction, are less agreeable to the divine Majesty. Our actions are like roses, which when fresh have more beauty, yet when dry have more strength and sweetness. Our works performed with tenderness of heart are more agreeable to ourselves, who regard only our own satisfaction,

yet when performed in the time of dryness they possess more sweetness, and become more precious in the sight of God. Yes, dear Philothea, in the time of dryness our will forces us to the service of God, as it were, by violence; and, consequently, it must necessarily be more vigorous and constant than in the time of consolation.

It is not great merit to serve a prince in the time of peace, amongst the delights of the court; but to serve him amidst the hardships of war troubles and persecutions is a true mark of constancy and fidelity. The Blessed Angela de Fulgino says, that the prayer which is most acceptable to God is that which we make by force and constraint; the prayer to which we apply ourselves, not for the pleasure which we find in it, nor by inclination, but purely to please God; to which our will carries us against our inclinations, violently forcing its way through the midst of those clouds of avidity which oppose it. I say the same of every kind of good works, whether interior or exterior; for, the more repugnance we feel in performing them, the more agreeable they are in the sight of God. The less we consult our particular interest in the pursuit of virtues, the more brilliantly does the purity of divine love shine forth in them. A child easily is naturally affectionate to his mother when she gives him sugar; but it is a sign of a great love if he manifests the same affection after she has given him wormwood, or any other bitter potion.

CHAPTER XV.

A REMARKABLE EXAMPLE IN CONFIRMATION OF THE PRECEDING REMARKS.

TO illustrate the whole of this instruction I will here relate an excellent passage from the history of St. Bernard, as I found it in a learned and judicious writer. Almost all, says he, who begin to serve God, and are not as yet experienced in the subtractions of grace, and in spiritual vicissitudes, finding themselves deprived of the sweetness of sensible devotion, and that agreeable light which invites them to run forward in the way of God, presently lose breath, and fall into pusillanimity and sadness. Persons of judgment account for this by saying that our rational nature cannot continue, for a long time, famished, as it were, and without some kind of delight, either heavenly or earthly. Now, as souls that are elevated above themselves, by the enjoyment of spiritual pleasures, easily renounce visible objects; so when, by the divine disposition, spiritual joy is withdrawn from them, finding themselves at the same time deprived of corporal consolations, and not being as yet accustomed to wait with patience for the return of the true sun, it seems to them as if they were neither in heaven nor on earth, and that they shall remain buried in a perpetual night. Thus, like little infants who have been weaned from the breast, they languish and moan, and be-

come fretful and troublesome to every one, and especially to themselves. The following circumstance happened, in a journey mentioned in this history, to one of the company, named Geoffry of Peronne, who had lately dedicated himself to the service of God. Being suddenly deprived of consolation, and overwhelmed with interior disgust, he began to remember his worldly friends, his kindred, and the riches which he had lately forsaken; by which he was assaulted with so strong a temptation that, not being able to conceal it in his behavior, one of his greatest confidants perceived it, and, having taken an opportunity, accosted him with mildness, and said to him in private, "What means this, Geoffry? Whence comes it, that, contrary to custom, thou art so pensive and melancholy?" — "Ah, brother!" answered Geoffry, with a deep sigh, "I shall never, never more be joyful whilst I live." The other, moved to pity at these words, went immediately, with fraternal zeal, and told it to their common father, St. Bernard, who, perceiving the danger, went into the next church to pray to God for him; whilst Geoffry, in the meantime, being overwhelmed with sadness, and resting his head upon a stone, fell asleep. Shortly after both of them arose, the one from prayer, having obtained the favor he had asked for, and the other from a sleep, but with so pleasant and serene a countenance that his friend, surprised at so great and sudden a change, could not refrain from gently reproaching him with the answer he had a little before given him, to which Geoffry replied, "If I

told thee before, that I should never more be joyful, I now assure thee that I shall never more be sorrowful."

Such was the issue of the temptation of this devout person. But observe, in this relation, dear Philothea, 1. That God commonly grants some foretaste of heavenly delight to such as enter into his service, in order to withdraw them from earthly pleasures, and encourage them in the pursuit of divine love; as a mother who, to allure her little infant to her breasts, puts honey upon them. 2. That, according to the secret designs of his providence, he is pleased to withhold from us the milk and honey of consolation, that, by weaning us in this manner, we may learn to feed on the more dry and solid bread of a vigorous devotion, exercised under the trials of disgust and spiritual dryness. 3. That, as violent temptations frequently arise during this desolating avidity, we must resolutely fight against them, since they proceed not from God; but, nevertheless, we must patiently suffer the avidity itself, since God has ordained it for the exercise of our virtue. 4. That we must never lose courage amidst those interior pains and conflicts, nor say with good Geoffry, "I shall never more be joyful"; for in the midst of the darkness of the night we must look for the return of daylight: and, again, in the fairest spiritual weather we must not say, I shall never more be sorrowful; for, as the wise man says, "In the day of good things be not unmindful of evils." Eccles. xi. 27. We must hope in the midst of afflictions, and fear in the midst of prosperity; and on both

occasions we must always humble ourselves. 5. That it is a sovereign remedy to discover our evil to some spiritual friend, who may be able to give us comfort.

I think it necessary to observe, Philothea, that in these conflicts God and our spiritual enemy have contrary designs. Our good God seeks to conduct us to perfect purity of heart, to an entire renunciation of self-interest in what relates to his service and to an absolute self-denial; whereas our internal foe endeavors, by these severe trials, to discourage us from the practice of prayer, and entice us back to sensual pleasures, that by thus making us troublesome to ourselves and to others he may discredit holy devotion. But, provided you observe the lessons I have given you, you will, amidst these interior afflictions, rapidly advance in the way of perfection. I cannot, however, dismiss this important subject without adding a few words more.

It sometimes happens that spiritual dryness proceeds from an indisposition of body, as when, through an excess of watching, labor, or fasting, we find ourselves oppressed by fatigue, drowsiness, lassitude, and the like infirmities, which, though they depend on the body, yet are calculated to incommode the spirit also, on account of the intimate connection that subsists between both. Now, on such occasions, we must never omit to perform several acts of virtue with the superior parts of our souls and the force of our will. For although our whole soul seems to be asleep, and overwhelmed with drowsiness and fatigue, yet the

actions of the superior part cease not to be very acceptable to God; and we may say at the same time, with the sacred Spouse, "I sleep, and my heart watcheth." Cant. v. 2. For, as I have observed before, though there is less satisfaction in this manner of performing our spiritual exercises, yet there is more merit and virtue. Now, the remedy on such occasion is to recruit the strength and vigor of our body by some kind of lawful recreation. So St. Francis ordained that his religious should use such moderation in their labors as not to oppress the fervor of their spirits.

As I am speaking of this glorious father, I must not forget to tell you that he himself was once assaulted by so deep a melancholy of spirit that he could not help showing it in his behavior; for if he desired to converse with his religious he was unable; if he withdrew himself from them it was worse; abstinence and corporal mortification oppressed him, and prayer gave him no relief. He continued two years in this manner, so that he seemed to be quite abandoned by God; but at length, after he had humbly suffered this violent storm, our Saviour, in an instant, restored him to a happy tranquillity. If, therefore, the greatest servants of God are subject to these shocks, how can we be astonished if they sometimes happen to us?

Part Fifth.

CONTAINING EXERCISES AND INSTRUCTIONS CALCULATED TO RENOVATE THE SOUL AND CONFIRM HER IN DEVOTION.

CHAPTER I.

THAT WE OUGHT EVERY YEAR TO RENEW OUR GOOD RESOLUTIONS BY THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES.

THE first point of these exercises consists in our being thoroughly sensible of their importance. Human nature easily falls off from its good affections, on account of the frailty and evil inclinations of the flesh, which depress the soul, and draw her always downwards, unless she often raise herself up by fervent resolutions; just as birds which fall suddenly to the ground if they do not multiply the strokes of their wings to support themselves in the air. For this reason, dear Philothea, you must repeat very often the good resolutions you have made to serve God, lest, by neglecting to do so, you should relapse into your former state, or rather into a worse one; for spiritual falls always cast us down to a lower state than that from which we ascended up to devotion.

As every watch, no matter how good it may be, must be daily wound up, and now and then taken asunder, to remove the rust and dust, and to mend and repair what may be broken or

out of order; so he that is careful of his soul ought to wind it up daily to God by the foregoing exercises, and at least once a year take it asunder to redress, rectify, and examine diligently all its affections and passions, that all its defects may be repaired. And as the watchmaker anoints the wheels, the springs, and all the works, with some delicate oils, that the motions of the wheels may be more easy, and the whole of the watch less subject to rust; so a devout person, after taking this review of his heart in order to renovate it, must anoint it with the Sacraments of Confession and the Holy Eucharist. This exercise will fortify your spirit, impaired by time, warm your heart, reanimate your good resolutions, and make your virtues flourish with fresh vigor. The primitive Christians were careful to practise this devotion on the anniversary day of the baptism of our Lord, when, as St. Gregory Nazianzen relates, they renewed those professions and protestations which are usually made in baptism. Let us, also, my dear Philothea, seriously dispose ourselves to follow their example. Having, then, for this purpose, chosen the most convenient time, according to the advice of your spiritual father, and withdrawn yourself into a little more solitude than ordinary, make one, two, or three meditations on the following points, according to the method I have prescribed in the second part.

CHAPTER II.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FAVOR WHICH GOD DOES US, IN CALLING US TO HIS SERVICE, ACCORDING TO THE PROTESTATIONS SET DOWN HERETOFORE.

CONSIDER the points of your protestation. First, that you would forsake, cast away, detest, and renounce forever all moral sin; secondly, that you would dedicate and consecrate your soul, heart, and body, with all their faculties, to the love and service of God; thirdly, that, if you should chance to fall into any sin, you would immediately rise again by the help of God's grace. Are not these just, noble, and generous resolutions? Consider well in thy soul, then, how holy and reasonable this protestation is, and how much to be desired.

2. Consider to whom you have made this protestation; for it is to God. If our word given to men bind us strictly, how much more when we have given it to God! "It is to thee, O Lord!" said David, "my heart hath spoken it, my heart hath uttered a good word. Oh, I will never forget it." Ps. xliv.

3. Consider that you made this protestation in the presence of the whole court of heaven. Ah, yes! the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, your good angel, your holy patron, and all that blessed company, beheld you, and their hearts were filled with joy and exultation at your words; they

saw, with the eyes of unspeakable love, your heart prostrate at the feet of your Saviour, consecrating itself to his service. As there was a particular joy on that occasion in the heavenly Jerusalem, so there will be now a commemoration of the same, if, with a sincere heart, you renew your resolutions.

4. Consider by what means you were induced to make your protestation. Ah! how good and gracious was God to you at that time! Oh, tell me sincerely, were you not invited to it by the sweet attractions of the Holy Ghost? Were not the cords, with which God drew your little boat to this blessed haven, composed of love and charity? How earnestly did he seek to allure you to it by the divine sweetness of the sacraments, spiritual reading, and prayer! Alas, dear Philothea! you were asleep, whilst God watched; he thought over your soul's thoughts of peace, and meditated in your favor meditations of love.

5. Consider that God inspired you with these holy resolutions in the flower of your age. Ah! what a happiness it is to learn early that which we cannot know but too late! St. Austin, having been called at the age of thirty years, exclaimed, "O ancient beauty! whence is it that I have known thee so late? Alas! I saw thee before, but I considered thee not"; and you may well say, O ancient sweetness! why did I not relish thee before? Alas! you did not even then deserve it. However, acknowledging the special favor God has done you in attracting you to himself in your youth, say with David, "Thou hast taught me, O God, from my youth; and till now I will declare

thy wonderful works." Ps. lxx. 17. But if this has happened in your old age, ah! Philothea, what an extraordinary grace, that, after having thus misspent all your former years, God should call you before your death, and stop the course of your misery at a time, in which, if it had continued, you must have been miserable for eternity!

Consider the effects of this vocation, and, comparing what you now are with what you have been, you will doubtless find in yourself a great change for the better. Do you not esteem it a happiness to know how to converse with God by prayer; to be inflamed with a desire of loving him; to have obtained a complete victory over the many passions with which you were troubled; to have avoided innumerable sins and perplexities of conscience; and, in fine, to have communicated so much oftener than you would have done, uniting yourself to that sovereign source of never-ending grace? Ah, how great are these favors! We must weigh them, Philothea, in the scales of the sanctuary; it is God's right hand that has done all this. "The right hand of the Lord," says David, "hath exalted me; I shall not die, but live, and shall declare with my heart, with my mouth, and by my actions, the wonderful works of the Lord." Ps. cxvii.

After all these considerations, which must doubtless furnish you with abundance of pious affections, conclude simply with an act of thanksgiving and fervent prayer, that you may make good use of them; retire with the most profound humility and the utmost confidence in God, deferring the making

the effort of your resolutions till after the second point of this exercise.

CHAPTER III.

EXAMINATION OF OUR SOUL ON ITS ADVANCEMENT IN DEVOTION.

AS the second part of the exercise is rather long, in order to practise it I must tell you that it is not necessary that you should perform it all at once, but at different times, considering your duties towards God, at one time; what relates to yourself, at another; what concerns your neighbor, at a third; and your passions, at the fourth. Neither would I advise you to perform it on your knees, except at the beginning and the end, which comprise the affections. The other points of the examination you may perform profitably whilst walking abroad, or still more profitably in bed, provided that you can preserve yourself against drowsiness, and keep thoroughly awake; but then, to do this, you must read them attentively beforehand. It is necessary, however, to go through the whole of the second point in three days and two nights at most, dedicating as much time to it on each day and night as you conveniently can; for if this exercise should be deferred to times far distant from each other it would lose its force, and make but weak impressions.

After each point of the examination you must

remark in what you shall find yourself to have failed; in what you are still defective, and the nature of the principal disorders you have discovered, that you may declare them to your confessor, in order to obtain his advice, and acquire resolution and spiritual strength to overcome them. Although on the days on which you perform this and the other exercises it is not absolutely necessary to withdraw yourself from all company, yet you must be more retired than usual, especially towards the evening, that you may sooner go to bed, and take that repose of body and mind which is necessary for consideration. You must also, during the day, make frequent aspirations to God, to the Blessed Virgin, to the angels, and to the whole court of heaven; moreover, all this must be done with a heart totally inflamed with the love of God, and a desire of attaining perfection.

To begin, then, this examination properly, 1. Place yourself in the presence of God. 2. Invoke the Holy Ghost, begging of him to enlighten your understanding, that you may attain a perfect knowledge of yourself, crying out, with St. Austin, to God in the spirit of humility, "O Lord! let me know thee, and let me know myself"; and with St. Francis, asking of God, "Lord! who art thou, and who am I?" Protest that it is not your intention to acquire this knowledge in order to attribute any glory to yourself on the occasion, but that you may rejoice in God, return him thanks, and glorify his blessed name for all benefits. Protest likewise, that if you find, as you fear you shall, that you made but little or no advancement,

or even that you have gone backward, you will not on that account be discouraged, grow colder, or be overcome by pusillanimity or faint-heartedness, but that, on the contrary, you will encourage and animate yourself, humble yourself the more, and apply, with the assistance of divine grace, the proper remedies to your defects. Afterwards consider calmly how you have behaved to the present hour towards God, your neighbor, and yourself.

CHAPTER IV.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE STATE OF OUR SOUL TOWARDS GOD.

NOW stands your heart with respect to mortal sin? Are you firmly resolved never to commit it, on any account whatever? Has this resolution continued from the time of your protestation till the present moment? In this resolution consists the foundation of the spiritual life.

How is your heart disposed with regard to the commandments of God? Do you find them good, sweet, and agreeable? Ah! my child, he whose taste is in good order, and whose stomach is sound, loves good meat and rejects bad.

How is your heart affected with regard to venial sin? We cannot keep ourselves so pure as not to fall now and then into such sins; but is there none to which you have a particular inclination; or,

what would be still worse, is there none to which you bear an affection and love?

How is your heart affected with regard to spiritual exercises? Do you love them? Do you esteem them? Do they not make you uneasy? Are you not disgusted with them? To which of them do you find yourself more or less inclined? To hear the word of God, to read it, to discourse of it, to meditate, to aspire to God, to go to confession, to receive spiritual counsel, to prepare yourself for communion, to communicate, to restrain your affections, — in all this, what is there to which you feel repugnance? If you find anything to which your heart has less inclination, examine the cause whence this dislike arises, and apply the remedy.

How stands your heart towards God himself? Does it delight in the remembrance of God? Does this remembrance leave an agreeable sweetness behind it? "Ah!" said David, "I remembered God, and I was delighted." Does your heart feel an inclination to love God, and a particular satisfaction in relishing this love? Does not your heart love to reflect on the immensity of God, on his goodness, on his sweetness? If the remembrance of God comes to you amidst the occupations and vanities of the world, do you not willingly receive it? Does it not seize upon your heart? Does it not seem to you that your heart turns towards that side, and, as it were, runs to meet her God? Certainly there are such souls to be found.

When the husband of an affectionate wife returns home from a distant country, as soon as she

is sensible of his approach, or hears his voice, although she be ever so much engaged in business, or forcibly detained from him by some urgent occupation, yet her heart is not withheld from him, but leaps over all other thoughts to think on her husband, who is returned. It is the same with souls that love God well; let them be ever so busy, when the remembrance of God comes near them they lose almost the thought of all things else, so rejoiced are they that this dear remembrance is returned; and this is a very good sign.

How is your heart affected towards Jesus Christ, God, and man? Do you place your happiness in him? As bees find pleasure in their honey, and wasps in corrupted things, so good souls seek their happiness in thinking on Jesus Christ, and feel a tender affection towards him; but the wicked please themselves about vanities.

How is your heart affected towards the blessed Virgin, the saints, and your good angel? Do you love them? Have you a special confidence in their patronage? Are you pleased with their pictures, their lives, and their praises?

As to your tongue: how do you speak of God? Do you find pleasure in speaking well of him, according to your condition and ability? Do you love to sing his praises?

As to works: consider whether you take the exterior glory of God to heart, and are emulous of doing something for his honor; for such as love God love, like David, the adorning of his house.

Can you discover that you have forsaken any affection, or renounced anything for the sake of God? for it is a good sign of love to deprive ourselves of anything in favor of him whom we love. What, then, have you hitherto forsaken for the love of God?

CHAPTER V.

AN EXAMINATION OF OUR STATE WITH REGARD TO OURSELVES.

HOW do you love yourself? Do you not love yourself too much for this world? If so, you will desire to live always here and be very solicitous to establish yourself on this earth; but if you love yourself for heaven, you will desire, or at least be willing, to depart hence at whatever hour it shall please our Lord.

Do you observe due order in the love of yourself? For the inordinate love of ourselves is the only thing that will cause our ruin. Now, a well-ordered love requires that we should love the soul more than the body; that we should be more solicitous to acquire virtue than anything else; the we should set a higher estimation on the favor of heaven than on the honor of this low and perishable world. A well-ordered heart will oftener say within itself, "What will the angels say, if I think upon such a thing?" than "What will men say?"

What kind of love have you for your own heart? Are you not willing to serve it in its infirmities? Alas! you ought to assist it, and procure assistance for it, whenever passions torment it, and for this purpose to neglect every other consideration.

What do you esteem yourself before God? Doubtless nothing. It is no great humility in a fly to esteem herself nothing in comparison of a mountain; nor for a drop of water to hold itself for nothing in comparison of the sea; nor for a spark of fire to hold itself nothing in respect to the sun; but humility consists in not esteeming ourselves above others, and in not desiring to be so esteemed by others. How are you disposed in this respect?

As to your tongue: Do you not sometimes boast of yourself in one way or another? Do you not flatter yourself in speaking of yourself?

As to recreation: Do you allow yourself pleasure contrary to your health,—I mean vain or unprofitable pleasure; such, for example, as that which prevents you from retiring to bed at a proper hour and the like?

CHAPTER VI.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE STATE OF OUR SOUL TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOR.

THE love of husband and wife ought to be sweet and tranquil, constant and persevering, and this principally because the will of God requires it. I say the same of the love of our children, our near relations, and our friends, every one according to his rank.

But, to speak in general, how is your heart affected towards your neighbor? Do you love him from your heart, and for the love of God? To discern this well you must represent to yourself troublesome and disagreeable persons, for it is among them that we exercise the love of God towards our neighbor, and much more among those who injure us, either by their actions or words. Examine well whether your heart be well disposed towards them, or whether you do not find a greater repugnance to love them.

Are you not apt to speak ill of your neighbor, and especially of such as do not love you? Do you refrain from doing evil to your neighbor, either directly or indirectly? Provided you be reasonable, you will easily perceive it.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE AFFECTIONS OF OUR SOUL.

I HAVE thus protracted these points, in the examination of which consists the knowledge of our spiritual advancement; for the examination of sin is rather for the confession of such as think not seriously of advancing in devotion.

We must not, however, delay too long on any of these points, but consider gently in what state our heart has been with regard to them, and what considerable faults we have committed.

But, to abridge the whole, we must reduce the examen to a search into our passions; and if it be inconvenient to consider every point in particular, as has been said, we may examine in general what have been our dispositions, and how we have behaved ourselves in our love to God, our neighbor, and ourselves; in our hatred for our own sins, and for those of others, — for we desire the extirpation of both; in our desires relating to riches, pleasures, and honors; in our fear of the dangers of sin, and in that of the loss of our worldly goods, — for we are apt to fear the one too much, and the other too little; in our hope, placing too much reliance on the world and creatures, and too little on God and things eternal; in an inordinate sadness, or excessive joy for vain things. In a word, we must examine what affections entangle our heart, what passions possess it, in what it has principally

strayed out of the way; for by the passions we may judge of the state of the soul, by examining them one after the other; and, as he that plays on the lute, by touching all the strings finds which are out of tune, and makes them accord either by winding them up, or letting them down; so, if after having examined the passions of love, hatred, desire, hope, sadness, and joy in our soul, we find them out of tune for that harmony which we desire to make to the greater glory of God, we may accord them by means of his grace, and the counsel of our spiritual director.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFFECTIONS TO BE FORMED AFTER THIS EXAMINATION.

AFTER having quietly considered each point of the examination into the state of your soul, you must afterwards proceed to the affections in this manner: —

1. Return thanks to God for the little amendment you may have found in your life since your resolution, and acknowledge that it has been his mercy alone that has wrought it in and for you.

2. Humble yourself exceedingly before God, acknowledging that, if you have not advanced much, it has been through your own fault, because you have not faithfully, courageously, and constantly corresponded with the inspirations, graces,

and affections which he has given you in prayer, and at other times.

3. Promise that you will eternally praise him for the graces which he has bestowed on you, and for having withdrawn you from your evil inclinations, to make this little amendment.

4. Ask pardon for your infidelity and disloyalty in not corresponding with his graces.

5. Offer him your heart, that he may make himself the sole master of it.

6. Beseech him to make you forever faithful to him.

7. Invoke the saints, the blessed Virgin, your good angel, your holy patron, St. Joseph, and the whole court of heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSIDERATIONS PROPER TO RENEW OUR GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

AFTER having made your examination, and conferred with some worthy director concerning your defects, and the proper remedies for them, make use of one of the following considerations every day, by way of meditation, employing in it the time of your mental prayer, observing always the same method with regard to the preparation and the affections as you did in the meditations of the first part, by placing yourself first in the presence of God, and then imploring his grace to establish you in his holy love and service.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST CONSIDERATION. — THE EXCELLENCE OF OUR SOUL.

CONSIDER the worth and excellence of your immortal soul, which is endued with an understanding capable of knowing, not only this visible world, but also that there are angels, an eternity, a heaven, and a most high sovereign, and ineffable God, and which, moreover, knows the means of living well in this visible world, that she may one day be associated with the angels of heaven, and enjoy God for all eternity.

Consider, also, that your soul has a will capable of loving God, and cannot hate him in himself. Take a view of your heart, and behold how generous it is; and that, as bees can never stay upon any corrupt thing, but only stop among the flowers, so no creature can ever satisfy your heart, for it can never rest but in God alone. Recall to your remembrance the dearest and strongest affections that have hitherto engaged your heart, and judge in truth, whether, in the midst of them, it was not ful of anxious inquietudes, tormenting thoughts, and restless cares.

Our heart, alas! runs eagerly in pursuit of creatures, thinking that they will satisfy its desires; but as soon as it has overtaken them it finds its satisfaction still afar off, God being unwilling that our heart should find any resting-place, like the dove which went out of Noah's ark, that it may

return to himself, from whom it proceeded. Ah! what natural beauty is there in our heart! Why, then, do we detain it against its will in the service of creatures?

Since, then, O soul! thou art capable of knowing and loving God, why wilt thou amuse thyself about anything less than God? Since thou mayest advance thy claim to eternity, why shouldst thou amuse thyself about transitory moments? It was one of the most sorrowful reflections of the prodigal son that he might have been faring deliciously at his father's table whilst he was feeding amongst the filthy swine. Since, O my soul! thou art capable of God, woe be to thee if thou content thyself with anything less than God.

Elevate your soul cheerfully with this consideration: remind her that she is immortal, and worthy of eternity; animate her with courage on this subject.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECOND CONSIDERATION.—THE EXCELLENCE OF VIRTUE.

CONSIDER that nothing but virtue and devotion can satisfy your soul in this world. Behold how beautiful they are, and draw a comparison between the virtues and their contrary vices. How amiable is patience, when compared with revenge! Meekness, compared with anger and vexation! Humility, compared with arrogance and

ambition! Liberality, compared with covetousness! Charity, in comparison with envy! Sobriety, compared with revellings! For virtues have this admirable quality, that they delight the soul with an incomparable sweetness and satisfaction after we have practised them; whereas vices leave the soul exceedingly fatigued and disordered. Why, then, do we not endeavor to acquire this satisfaction?

With respect to vices, he that has but little of them is uneasy, and he that has more of them is more discontented; but as for virtues, he that has but a little has already some contentment, which increases as the virtues themselves increase.

O devout life! how fair, how lovely, how sweet and delightful art thou! thou alleviatest our tribulations, and addest sweetness to our consolations; without thee good is evil, and pleasures are full of restlessness, trouble, and deceits. Ah! he who would know thee well might exclaim, with the Samaritan woman, "Lord! give me this water!"—an aspiration frequently used by the holy mother Theresa, and St. Catherine of Genoa, although upon different occasions.

CHAPTER XII.

THE THIRD CONSIDERATION.—THE EXAMPLES OF THE SAINTS.

CONSIDER the examples of the saints in every condition of life. What have they not done to devote themselves entirely to the love and service of God? Look on the invincible resolution of the martyrs; what torments have they not suffered in defence of the faith? But, above all, behold that innumerable train of holy virgins, whiter than the lilies in purity, fairer than the roses in charity; of whom, some at twelve, others at thirteen, fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five years of age, have endured a thousand kinds of martyrdom, rather than renounce their resolution, not only with regard to the profession of their faith, but, also, their protestation of devotion; some dying rather than forsake their virginity; others rather than desist from the service of their companions in torments, from comforting the afflicted, and burying the dead. O good God! what fortitude have they not evinced on these occasions!

Consider the unshaken constancy with which so many holy confessors have despised the world; how invincible have they shown themselves in their resolutions, from which nothing could ever divert them; they have embraced them without reserve, and practised them without exception. Good God! what admirable things does St. Austin relate of his holy mother, St. Monica? With

what constancy did she pursue her determination of serving God, both in marriage and in widowhood? How admirably does St. Jerome speak of his dear daughter Paula, in the midst of so many oppositions, in the midst of such a variety of accidents? What is there that we might not do after such excellent patterns? They were what we are; they served the same God, and practised the same virtues; why, then, should not we do as much, according to our condition and vocation, to preserve our resolution and holy protestation?

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FOURTH CONSIDERATION.—THE LOVE THAT JESUS CHRIST BEARS US.

CONSIDER the incomparable love with which Jesus Christ our Lord has suffered so much in this world, but especially in the Garden of Olives and upon Mount Calvary, for your sake. By all these pains and sufferings he obtained of God the Father good resolutions and protestations for your heart; and by the same means he also obtained whatever is necessary to maintain, nourish, strengthen, and fulfil them. O resolution, how precious art thou, being the daughter of such a mother, as is the passion of my Saviour! Oh, how tenderly ought my soul to cherish thee, since thou hast been so dear to my sweet Jesus! Alas,

O Saviour of my soul! thou didst die to purchase for me these resolutions. Oh, grant me the grace rather to suffer death than to lose them!

Observe, my Philothea, it is certain that the heart of Jesus beheld your heart from the tree of the cross, and, by the love which he bore towards it, obtained for it all the good you shall ever have, and among the rest your resolutions. Yes, Philothea, we may all say, with the prophet Jeremias: "O Lord, before I had a being thou didst behold me, and called me by my name"; since the divine goodness did actually prepare for us all the general and particular means of salvation, and consequently our good resolutions. As a pregnant woman prepares the cradle, the linen, and swathing-clothes, and even a nurse for the child which she hopes to bring forth, although it is not yet in the world; so our Saviour, who designed to bring you forth to salvation, and make you his child, prepared all that was necessary for you upon the tree of the cross: your spiritual cradle, your linen, and swathing-clothes, your nurse, and all that was necessary for your happiness. Such are all those graces by which he seeks to attract your soul and bring it to perfection.

Ah, my God! how deeply ought we to imprint this thy love in our memory! Is it possible that I could have been so tenderly beloved by my Saviour as that he should think of me in particular even in all these little occurrences, by which he has drawn me to himself? How much, then, ought we to love, cherish, and convert them all to our own profit! O consoling reflection! the amiable

heart of God has thought of Philothea, loved her, and procured her a thousand means of salvation, even as many as if there had been no other souls in the world to think of. As the sun shining upon one place of the earth enlightens it no less than if it shined on no other, so in the very same manner is our Lord solicitous for all his dear children, thinking on each of them as though he had forgotten the rest. "He loved me," says St. Paul, "and delivered himself for me." He says for me alone, as if he had done nothing for the rest. O Philothea! let this sacred truth be imprinted in your soul, in order to cherish and nourish your resolution, which has been so precious to the heart of our Saviour.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIFTH CONSIDERATION.—THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS US.

CONSIDER the eternal love which God has borne towards you: for, before our Lord Jesus Christ, as man, suffered on the cross for you, his divine Majesty, by his omniscience, already foresaw your being, and loved you exceedingly. But when did his love for you begin? Even when he began to be God. But when did he begin to be God? Never, for he has always been without a beginning or end, so also has he always loved you from all eternity, and in consequence of this love

he has prepared for you these graces and favors. Hence, speaking to you as well as others, by the prophet Jeremias, he says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee"; and amongst other things he caused you to make firm resolutions to serve him.

O God! what resolutions are these on which thou hast thought and meditated from all eternity! Ah, how dear and precious should they be to us! What ought we not to suffer, rather than forget the least of them! Though the whole world should be destroyed in consequence, yet we must observe them faithfully; for the whole world is not worth one soul, and a soul is worth nothing without these resolutions.

CHAPTER XV.

GENERAL AFFECTIONS ON THE PRECEDING CONSIDERATIONS, AND A CONCLUSION OF THESE EXERCISES.

O DEAR resolutions! fair tree of life, which God, with his own hand has planted in the midst of my heart, and which my Saviour desires to water with his blood to make thee fruitful: I will rather endure a thousand deaths than suffer any wind of prosperity or adversity to pluck thee up. No; neither vanity, delights, riches, nor tribulations, shall ever withdraw me from my design.

Alas! O Lord, it is thou thyself that hast

planted and eternally preserved in thy fatherly bosom this fair tree for the garden of my heart. Alas! how many souls are there who have not been favored in this manner; and how, then, can I ever sufficiently humble myself beneath thy mercy?

O fair and holy resolutions! if I preserve you you will preserve me; if you live in my soul, my soul will live in you. Live, then, forever, O resolutions, which are eternal in the mercy of God; live eternally in me, and let me never forsake you!

After these affections you must consider the particular means necessary to maintain these cherished resolutions, and determine to be faithful in making good use of them; such as frequent prayer, the sacraments, good works, the amendment of your faults discovered in the examination, retrenching the occasions of evil, and following the counsels which shall be given you for this purpose.

Afterwards, by way of recruiting your strength, make a thousand protestations that you will persevere in your resolutions; and as if you held your heart, soul, and will in your hands, dedicate, consecrate, sacrifice, and immolate them to God, protesting never to take them back again, but leave them in the hand of his divine Majesty, to follow on all occasions his holy ordinances.

Pray to God to renovate you entirely, and to bless and strengthen this your protestation. Invoke the blessed Virgin, your guardian angel, and your holy patron.

In this disposition of heart go to your spiritual

father, and accuse yourself of the principal faults which you may have remarked since your general confession, and, receiving absolution in the same manner as the first time, pronounce and sign your protestation before him; and, in conclusion, unite your renovated heart to its first principle, your Saviour, in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF OUR SENTIMENTS AFTER THIS EXERCISE.

ON the day on which you have made this renovation, and the days immediately following, you ought frequently to repeat from your heart those inflamed words of St. Paul, St. Austin, St. Catherine of Genoa, etc.: "No, I am no more my own; whether I live, or whether I die, I am my Saviour's. I have no longer anything of me or mine; my *me* is Jesus, and my *mine* is to be wholly his. O world! thou art always thyself, and I have hitherto been always myself, but from henceforth I will be myself no more." No, we shall be no more ourselves, for we shall have our heart changed, and the world which has so often deceived us shall be deceived in us; for, perceiving our change only by degrees, it will think us still Esaus, but we shall find ourselves to be Jacobs. All these exercises ought to remain fixed in the heart, and when we finish our consideration

and meditation we must turn gently and quietly towards our ordinary affairs and conversations, lest the precious liquor of our resolutions should be suddenly spilt; for it must penetrate through all parts of the soul, without, however, any effort of mind or body.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ANSWER TO TWO OBJECTIONS WHICH MAY BE MADE TO THIS INTRODUCTION.

THE world will perhaps tell you, Philothea, that these exercises and advices are so numerous, that he who would practise them must apply himself to nothing else. Alas! Philothea, should we do nothing else, we should do enough, since we should do all that we ought to do in this world. But do not you perceive the delusion? If they were all to be necessarily performed every day, they would then, indeed, constitute our whole occupation; but it is not requisite to perform them otherwise than in their proper time and place, as occasions may present themselves. How many civil laws and regulations there are which must be observed, but it is universally understood that they are to be executed on proper occasions, and no one imagines that they are all to be put in force every day. David was a king charged with the most difficult affairs, yet he performed many more exercises than I have prescribed to you. St. Lewis

was a prince admirable both in war and peace, and one who administered justice, and managed his affairs with the most assiduous attention, yet he heard two masses every day, said vespers and compline with his chaplain, made his meditation, visited hospitals every Friday, confessed and took the discipline, heard sermons frequently, and held very often spiritual conferences; yet, notwithstanding all this, he never saw an occasion of promoting the public good which he did not improve, and diligently put in execution; and his court was more splendid and flourishing than it had ever been in the time of his predecessors. Perform, then, these exercises as I have marked them out for you, and God will give you sufficient leisure and strength to perform all your other duties, although he should make the sun stand still for you, as he did for Josue. We always do enough when God works with us.

The world will perhaps say that I suppose, almost throughout the whole work, that Philothea has the gift of mental prayer; and yet every one has it not; so that this introduction will not serve for all. It is true I have made this supposition; it is also true that every one has not this gift; but it is no less true that almost all, even the most ignorant, may have it, provided they have good guides, and are willing to take as much pains to obtain it as it deserves. But, should there be some who have not this gift in any degree whatever, which I think almost impossible, a prudent spiritual director will easily supply that defect, by teaching

them to read, or to hear others read, the consdierations included in the meditations with profound and close attention.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE THREE LAST AND PRINCIPAL ADVICES FOR THIS INTRODUCTION.

ON the first day of every month repeat, after your meditations, the protestation inserted in the first part, p. 50; and at all times protest that you are determined to observe it; saying, with David, "No, my God, thy justifications I will never forget, for by them thou hast given me life." Ps. cxviii. When you feel any disorder in your soul take your protestation in hand, and, prostrate in the spirit of humility, recite it with your whole heart, and you will find great ease and comfort.

Make an open confession, not of being devout, but of desiring to become devout. Be not ashamed to practise those necessary actions which conduct the soul to the love of God. Acknowledge frankly that you would rather die than commit a mortal sin; that you are resolved to frequent the sacraments, and to follow the counsels of your director, though sometimes it may not be necessary to name him; for this candid profession of our desire to serve God, and of consecrating ourselves entirely to his love,

is very acceptable to his divine Majesty, who commands us not to be ashamed either of him or of his cross. Besides, it presents many proposals and invitations which the world might make to draw us into the contrary way, and oblige us in honor to act according to what we profess. As the philosophers professed themselves philosophers, that they might be suffered to live like philosophers; so we must profess ourselves to be desirous of devotion, that we may be suffered to live devoutly. If any one tell you that you may live devoutly without practising these advices and exercises, answer him mildly, that, your weakness being so great, you stand in need of more help and assistance than others.

In fine, my dearest Philothea, I conjure you by all that is sacred in heaven and on earth, by the baptism which you have received, by the breasts with which Jesus Christ was nourished, by the charity with which he loved you, and by the bowels of that mercy in which you hope, continue to persevere in this blessed enterprise of a devout life. Our days glide away, and death is at the gate. "The trumpet sounds retreat," says St. Gregory Nazianzen; "let every man be ready, for judgment is near." St. Symphorian's mother, seeing him led to martyrdom, cried after him, "My son! remember eternal life, look up to heaven, and think upon him who reigns there; your approaching end will quickly terminate the short career of this life." My Philothea, I also will say to you, Look up to heaven, and do not forfeit it for this despicable earth:

look down into hell, and do not cast yourself into it for transitory joys; look at Jesus Christ, and do not renounce him for the world; and, when the labors of a devout life seem painful to you, sing with St. Francis: —

> "How sweet are all those momentary toils,
> Which lead to never-ending heavenly joy!"

Live Jesus! to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, now and throughout the endless ages of eternity. — Amen.

END.

A CONFERENCE

BETWEEN AN EMINENT DIVINE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY AND A POOR BEGGAR, ON THE MEANS OF ATTAINING TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION. TRANSLATED FROM THE WORKS OF J. THAULERIUS, D.D., PRINTED AT PARIS, 1623, p. 833.

THERE was a great divine who prayed, for the space of eight years, that God would vouchsafe to direct him to a man who might show him the way of truth. Now it happened, on a certain day, whilst he found his soul excited to offer this petition with a more than ordinary fervor, he heard a voice from Heaven, which said to him, "Go out to the church porch, and there thou shalt meet with a man who will teach thee the way of truth." On going thither he found a poor beggar, whose feet were covered with sores, dirt, and mire, and all the clothes on his back not worth three farthings. Having courteously saluted him, he wished him a good morning. To which the beggar replied, "I never remember to have had a bad morning."—"God prosper you," said the doctor. "What say you?" said the beggar; "I never was otherwise than prosperous."—"I wish you all happiness," replied the doctor; "but what do you mean by speaking in this manner?"—"Why," said the poor man, "I never was unhappy."—"God bless you," said the doctor; "explain yourself, for I cannot well understand your meaning." The poor man answered, "That I shall do very

willingly. You wished me, master doctor, a good morning; and I answered that I never had a bad morning; for if I am hungry I praise God; if I suffer cold I praise God; if it hail, snow, or rain, if the weather be fair or foul, I give praise to God; if I am miserable and despised by all the world, I still give praise to God; and therefore I never met with a bad morning. You also prayed that God would prosper me; to which I answered, that I never was otherwise than prosperous; for, having learned to live with God, I know for certain that all he does must necessarily be for the best; and therefore whatever happens to me by his will, or his permission, whether it be pleasant or disagreeable, sweet or bitter, I always receive with joy, as coming from his merciful hand, for the best; and therefore I never was otherwise than prosperous. You wished me also all happiness; and I, in like manner, replied, that I had never been unhappy; for I have resolved to adhere to the divine will alone, and have so absolutely relinquished self-will as to will always whatever God wills, and therefore I was never unhappy; for I never desire to have any other will than his, and therefore I resign my will entirely to him." "But what would you say," said the doctor, "if it should be the will of this Lord of majesty to cast you down into the bottomless pit?"—"How," said he, hastily, "cast me down into the bottomless pit! Why, if he should really do so, I have two arms, — the one of true humility, by which I am united to his most sacred humanity, which I place under him; the other, which is my right arm of love, by

which I am united to his divinity; and with both I would embrace him so closely, and hold him so firmly, that he would be obliged to go down with me; and I would much rather choose to be, even in hell, with God, than in heaven without him." From this discourse the doctor learned that true resignation, accompanied with profound humility, is the shortest way to God. Having afterwards asked the beggar, whence he came, he answered, "From God."—"But where," said the doctor, "did you find God?"—"I found him," said he, "where I forsook all creatures."—"And where or with whom did you leave God?" said the doctor. "I left him," said he, "with the clean of heart, and amongst men of good will."—"But I pray thee tell me who, or what, art thou."—"I am a king," replied he. The doctor further asking him where his kingdom was, he replied, "My kingdom is in my soul; for I can govern both my exterior and interior senses so absolutely that all the affections and forces of my soul are in perfect subjection to me; which kingdom is doubtless more excellent than all the kingdoms of this world." The doctor asked him how he had attained to this perfection. He answered, "By silence, meditation, and by tending always to an union with God; for I could never rest," said he, "in anything less than God; and now, having found him, I enjoy peace and everlasting rest."

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